

The Play's Not a Thing

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THE PLAY COMES FROM A FAMILY

Many things have stood in the way of a proper understanding of the play. One of these obstacles is the failure to realize that the theatre is not a homogeneous entity. Given that realization, it is easy to see how it will be idle to look for the essence of the theatre in the guise of a set of properties which being common will bind all varieties of it and being peculiar will distinguish it from other activities that resemble the theatre. Not that one shouldn't look for binding properties—only they will be no more than a network of resemblances between varieties. And not that one shouldn't look for properties peculiar to varieties of the theatre that enable us to see what the theatre is not.

Let's begin this inquiry, then, with a listing of the varieties of the theatre that need to be taken into account:

1. Poetry theatre—as distinct from poetry;
2. Prose theatre—as distinct from prose literature;
3. Spectacle theatre (pantomime, puppetry, shadow play, vaudeville, revue, musical comedy, tableau vivant, or the like)—as distinct from spectacle arts (acrobatics, animal show, magic show, peep-show, slide show, *son et lumière* or the like);
4. Dance theatre (the Russian ballet, Indian classical *nṛtya*, dance and song theatre, or the like)—as distinct from abstract dance (non-representational varieties like the classical Indian *nṛtta*, a good deal of modern dance and folk dance);
5. Music theatre (the Italian opera, or the like)—as distinct from verbal music (song in the broadest sense) and non-verbal music (both purely instrumental music and pure vocal exercises like the classical Hindustani *tarānā*).

Poetry theatre (also called poetic drama) and prose theatre (we might also call it prose drama) are sometimes grouped together as literary theatre (also simply called drama) and thus set off from the other three non-dramatic varieties of theatre. A play is a piece of drama. In classical Sanskrit a *rūpaka* is any theatre piece whether a dramatic

piece (or *nāṭaka*) or one of the other nine varieties of theatre.

Each of these five varieties of the theatre stand distinguished (as we have noticed) from other kinds of art activity such as poetry, prose literature, spectacle arts, and so on. This makes sense in that the varieties of the theatre are all art forms. (From now on we shall use the word 'art' in the sense of the fine arts in the broadest sense including of course the fine arts in the earlier narrower sense, namely, graphic art, sculpture, and architecture.)

Theatre activity is art activity. Non-artistic activities like drills, sales talk (from the singsong hawker's cry to the elaborate advertisement film), sacred rites, games, sports, spectacles (from the royal procession to public hanging), even slinging matches (as between fishwives) may come to resemble art and take on artistic qualities; but they are not art. *En revanche*, artistic activities may take on non-artistic functions, as when a song becomes a national anthem, Elizabeth Browning's poems became love letters, the Russian ballet or Shakespeare's theatre have become national heritages, a piece of sculpture may become a misguided missile in angry hands, and so forth; but they all remain art (unless we succumb to the functional fallacy). Again, artistic activities may have non-artistic origins; thus, a folk dance form may be seen to spring from agricultural operations, or the play *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles may come to be seen (thanks to the Cambridge scholars like Fraser and Murray) to be isomorphic with a sacrificial ritual, and so forth; but they all remain art (unless we succumb to the genetic fallacy). As Archbishop Richard Whately has reminded us, everything is what it is and not another thing.

Varieties of art, or art forms, constitute a larger network within which one can discern a smaller network of varieties of the theatre, or theatre forms. The larger network will include not only theatre forms and the adjoining art forms like poetry and prose literature as noticed earlier but also the following art forms:

non-verbal cinema (silent cinema, animation film, slide show, the picture strip);
 verbal cinema (speaking film, comic strip with speech balloons, etc);
 abstract graphic art;
 representational graphic art;
 abstract photography and phonography;
 representational photography and phonography;
 abstract sculpture;
 representational sculpture; and
 design arts (such as architecture, landscaping, calligraphy, interior design, product design).

If we have not said anything about radio and television so far, there is a reason for it, as should become clear later on.

Let's now look for the crisscrossing resemblances and differences that underlie the whole network of art forms with a special focus on theatre forms. An art form can differ from another art form along a variety of axes:

1. A piece of art has a vehicle and a content. Thus, a representative painting may have pigments, oil, canvas for its vehicle and still life, flora and fauna, the human figure for its content—in such a manner that its vehicle and content are nearly evenly balanced. In an abstract painting on the other hand its vehicle dominates its content. Finally in functional design arts (as in most product designs or in a Bauhaus interior) content dominates vehicle.
2. A piece of art may be seen as a spell of activity or an object or both. (No wonder that art pieces are variously called performances, works, objects.) A painting is clearly an object—the brush movements or the eye movements may be felt, but they always terminate in the awareness of the art object. Equally clearly a musical piece is a spell of activity, it cannot collapse into an object—musical time cannot be spatialized into clock time or even metronomic time.
3. A piece of art is received by the recipient through its vehicle. The channel of reception may be purely sensory, visual or audial or audio-visual as the case may be, or it may be verbal or ideational as well. The reception may be structured over space or time or space-time. Thus, poetry is audible-intelligible over time or (as with concrete poetry or graphic poetry like Chinese poetry) visible-audible-intelligible over space-time, while prose literature is merely intelligible over time (its audible/visible input merely conveying the intelligible text without becoming an integral part and parcel of the work of art as such).

So art forms stand distinguished from each other by virtue of their vehicle-content balance, of their activity-object status, and of the channel and structuring of their reception (among other things, of course).

Let's consider the five theatre forms in the light of these distinctions made along the three axes:

1. Poetry theatre has even vehicle-content balance, more activity than object status, and more verbal than audial or audio-visual reception structured over time or space-time.

2. Prose theatre has the same character as poetry theatre except that the verbal input is prose rather than poetry.
3. Spectacle theatre has even vehicle-content balance, more activity than object status, and more visual than audial (and verbal) reception structured over space-time (the verbal input may be totally absent).
4. Dance theatre has even vehicle-content balance, spectacular-object and activity status, and more visual than audial (and intelligible) reception structured over space-time (the verbal input may be totally absent).
5. Music theatre has even vehicle-content balance, activity status, and more audial than intelligible or visual reception structured more over time than over space.

To sum up, the play whether it is a piece of poetic drama or prose drama is a work of art belonging to a family of theatre forms which in turn belongs to a larger family of art forms. In using the word 'family' we are suggesting that these forms present criss-crossing resemblances and differences rather than neat divisions and subdivisions in a classificatory tree.

Does this mean then that theatre or drama is a mixed art?

THE PLAY IS NOT A MIXTURE OF THINGS

One can see why the cliché that theatre or drama is a mixed art has come into currency, but one can't see how this cliché can be justified. There is no such thing as a mixed art form, for a work of art cannot be a mixture of things. Before we can pursue this point further, we have to ask ourselves a simple but basic question—how does a work of art exist at all? What is it made of? As the philosophers say, what is the locus, or situs, of its existence?

A work of art exists at two levels—at the level of material and at the level of medium. (This distinction is prefigured in Kant.) Thus, a painting can be thought of as pigments mixed with oil smeared onto a stretched piece of canvas; it is at this level that it can be said to have been produced and be bought or insured against fire or theft. Clearly, not every paint-daubed canvas-piece is a painting. That is why nobody would call paint and canvas the medium of painting—at best they constitute the vehicle material of painting. I speak of vehicle material in order to distinguish it from another kind of material. A painting can also be thought of as made out of its content material or experiential material. If it is a representational, or figurative, painting, then it is relatively easy to say what its content is,

what it is about. But even if it is an abstract, or non-representational, painting, one could still meaningfully ask the question—what is the painting about? Again, however, the painting has eluded us. Not every painted figure that is about something is painting—otherwise every painted map will be a painting. The painting as such exists at the level of medium—at that level the painting presents line and shape, colour, light and shade as they operate within painting space. These constitute the medium of painting. It is at this level that the painting has been created, not merely produced; interpreted, not merely figured out; appraised, not merely priced. A work of art, then, is open to the following discriminations as one looks for the locus of its existence:

1. Material:
 - a. vehicle.
 - b. content.
2. Medium.

The medium is what imparts form to the vehicle material as well as to the content material, imposes a pattern or shape on the material, and indeed serves to blur the line between vehicle and content. The vehicle does not convey the content, the vehicle embodies the content—at least in art at its best. It is the medium, again, that brings the material home to the recipient. It is at the level of medium that one assigns a work of art to a certain art form—it is at that level that it is received as painting or sculpture or music or poetry or whatever.

There is no such thing as a mixed art form. One art can enter into another art as material, as when music enters into dance as vehicle material or when dance enters into painting (as in some of Degas's work) as content material. It can do so even at the level of medium, as when cinema enters into a prose literary work (such as Sartre's novel *Les Jeux sont Faits*, *The Chips are Down*), which then has a cinematic quality about it. But there is never any doubt as to whether to respond to a given work as a poem or a prose work, a mobile sculpture or a dance piece, and so on. So dance theatre is really theatre dance; music theatre is really theatre music; but spectacle theatre (pantomime, for example) is really theatre art and not spectacle art comparable to the circus. (The Chinese opera and the Japanese theatre forms are probably kinds of spectacle theatre.) Our present concern is of course with drama—both poetry theatre (or poetic drama) and prose theatre (or prose drama). Both of these share certain properties, as we have already indicated, namely even vehicle-content balance, more activity than object status, and more verbal than audio-visual or audial reception structured over time or

space-time. Spectacle theatre shares the first and the second property, but it has more visual than audial (and verbal) reception structured over space-time (if the verbal input is present at all).

It will be useful to pursue further this comparison of drama with spectacle theatre. As vehicle material drama employs interpreted gesture, delivered word, and possibly music; on the other hand, spectacle theatre employs interpreted gesture and possibly delivered word and music. As content material both drama and spectacle theatre represent man's life among men, especially in face-to-face interaction (what Brecht calls '*menschliches Zusammenleben*', 1949/1964: p. 181, section 7)—drama makes a more ambitious use of language and so possibly has a greater range and penetration, a greater depth of field as it were (to use the photographer's term). At the level of medium, drama presents dramatic moves (including communicative moves) operating within a dramatic scene over dramatic time; on the other hand spectacle theatre presents theatrical moves (including theatrical communicative moves) operating within a theatrical arena over theatrical time. (See Table 1 for a quick comparison. It may be noted in passing that in speaking of the content material of drama Brecht quite appropriately calls it 'Stoff', stuff.)

It will be quickly noticed that the weight of this analysis, which is being offered here as a resolving of the problem of the situs of the existence of a dramatic piece, hinges on what we mean by the terms dramatic move and scene and time on the one hand and theatrical move and arena and time on the other hand. These two triads also contrast with two more triads, namely, narrative episode and scene and time and dance move and arena and time. The differences from one triad to the others stem from differences between the dramatic world, the theatrical world, the narrative world, and the dance world. We are deliberately adopting here a comparative approach to the characterization (not definition) of these different but adjoining art forms. (It may be noted that here we have put theatre dance and abstract dance together as dance.)

1. a. The dramatic world is an eminently human world in which appearances and underlying motives are being presented in close conjunction.
- b. A human act (including an act of communication) is presented as a motivated act, a dramatic move.
- c. The dramatic scene is an envelope of outer and inner relationships and situations that are being continuously redefined.

- d. Dramatic time serves to unfold the situation: the present is always pregnant with future, with tensions being built and resolved.
- e. The author of a dramatic piece can make great play in deciding how much of the total scene and action is known to which character and to the audience at any given point in the play.
- f. There is selection and intensification, developing and clarifying as compared with life as ordinarily lived and perceived.
- g. The recipient needs to pay undivided and unflagging attention and finds his expectations thwarted or satisfied.

Notes

1. The ordinary use of the word 'dramatic' is congruent with this—a 'dramatic' event is one that is sudden, unexpected, either tension-building or tension-resolving, and so revelatory of hidden forces.
2. This account of dramatic time is partially anticipated in Langer 1953 and Dawson 1970: P. 12 ff.
2. a. The theatrical world is a human world—a world with man caught in the web of things, with appearances overlaying hidden forces.
- b. A human gesture (including a gesture of communication) is presented as an act expressive of a drive, a theatrical move.
- c. The theatrical arena is very much a visible arena, a spectacle of shifting situations.
- d. Theatrical time serves to uncover the future breaking in upon the present and thwarting or satisfying the expectations.
- e. The author of a piece of spectacle theatre can make great play in deciding how much and with whom the recipient will identify himself and how much and in what action the recipient will feel involved.
- f. There is manipulation and exaggeration, sharpening and intensification as compared with life as ordinarily lived and perceived.
- g. The recipient needs to practise a willing suspension of disbelief and of personal response.
3. a. The narrative world is an eminently human world. (That goes for animal fables and fairy tales too.)
- b. Narrative poetry and prose present appearances as episodes—human acts, motives, and surrounding forces all fused in complex events of the narrative world.
- c. The narrative scene is a network of shifting relationships

- leading on to a conclusion. A narrative permits a greater depth of field, if needed.
- d. Narrative time is recollected time, either a past gone by and cut off from the present ('once upon a time') or a past that the present is pregnant with (that's how things have come to be what they are).
 - e. The author of a narrative piece can make great play in deciding who is to narrate what episode, what episode is to be narrated before what other episode, what is to be in the foreground and what is to be in the background.
 - f. The presentation can be schematic or ample, intensified or relaxed, clarified or diffused in relation to life as ordinarily lived and perceived. (Fiction need not be stranger than truth.)
 - g. In the course of the narrative 'what next?' yields to 'that's how it has been'. What matter are not expectations but hindsight. The recipient's attention can vary from one piece to another, one episode to the other.
4. a. The dance world is a world that does not let us pause at the appearance but it is eminently a world of forces behind appearances. (It will be seen that this world is closer to the theatrical world than it is to the dramatic world or the narrative world.)
 - b. A dance move is a force in action.
 - c. The dance arena is very much a visible arena, a spectacle of enduring and shifting configuration of forces.
 - d. Dance time is rhythmically experienced time. It lets us discover the forces breaking into action. It may thwart or satisfy perceptions which are neither foresights nor hindsight but insights into the manifestations of energy or of power as forces.
 - e. The dance world can and may draw the recipient so much into it that the distinction between the participant-performer and the participant-recipient gets lost (as when a visitor joins a harvest dance).

To sum up, it would pay to see drama in comparison with other art forms rather than simply to fix the gaze on drama alone in resolving the problem of the class identity of drama. This comparative approach allows us to see not only the network of resemblances and differences between drama and some adjoining art forms, but also how drama, far from being a mixture of arts, is an integrated whole in which one can find a place for the various elements that are supposed to go into it. Other arts, especially spectacle arts, music,

and dance, can and often do enter into drama as vehicle material, as content material, even as medium; and so can and does drama enter into other arts at different levels.

The integration of drama should not degenerate into a muddle in which each element vies for supremacy only to become a parasite. (As a drastic preventive measure against this possibility Brecht advocated in his Epic Theatre a '*Trennung der Elemente*', a severing of elements: Brecht 1930/1964: p. 39.)

THE PLAY IS A HAPPENING

The play is less a thing, an art object, than an activity, an art performance. The play is eminently a happening, a happening of a particular kind. At the level of material it is a performance presenting man's life among men, especially in face-to-face relationships. At the level of medium it is a transporting of an audience to a dramatic world sustaining and being sustained by dramatic moves against a dramatic scene over dramatic time. All else is secondary.

Radio and television are not artistic media; they are not media of communication so much as media of transmission. What is their relationship to drama if any? Any such relationship will have to do with the production aspect of drama. A play may be a theatre play, an open-air street play, a sit-around play-reading, a radio play, or a television play. The form of production admittedly makes a difference to the possibilities of the medium, but not such a vital difference. Television plays, television films, and television spectacle theatre pieces are as different from each other as are theatre plays, theatre films, and spectacle theatre pieces different from each other. The similarities between television plays, radio plays, and theatre plays are much more vital than the differences.

What are these differences? What happens, for example, to the visual element in a radio play or a sit-around play-reading or for that matter a 'silent' play-reading? Notice that one cannot have a radio dance or that the script of a spectacle theatre piece will lose far more in a 'silent' reading (unless the reader is a potential producer) than the text of a play would. The important thing to bear in mind, of course, is that a play-reading whether silent or loud differs radically from the reading of a lyric poem or even of a piece of narrative poetry or prose. The difference has to do with the 'visualizing' of the dramatic scene and the feel of dramatic time. A play-reading is a play-production, a mental staging in a sense in which the reading of literature (even narrative literature) is not a literary production.

Once we recognize this difference, it is easy to see that it is the mental staging that the play text is crying out for. Without mental staging the stage production is of no value; without stage production a mental staging is perhaps difficult but still possible. (This is reminiscent of the Hindu theological argument: without inner realization an icon is of no value; without an icon an inner realization is perhaps difficult to achieve but certainly not impossible.) The 'visualizing' in a television play is going to be different from the 'visualizing' in a television film. It will have no use for close-ups, for example. So, though we shall consider here only the theatre play as a happening, the considerations will also apply *mutatis mutandis* to other kinds of play production. It will also be seen why we earlier recognized (see Table 1 for example) audial reception over time for drama by the side of audio-visual reception over space-time.

Since we are dealing with drama or literary theatre in which the delivered word is an important input at the level of the vehicle, we shall take up the text of the play as the first important input to the play-happening. The text of the play reveals two layers: the poetry or prose to be delivered on-stage or even off-stage (the core text) and the staging directions that accompany the 'lines' to be delivered (the peripheral text). The core text consists chiefly of:

- overt speeches (dialogues and also monologues, songs, asides) ostensibly addressed by the characters to one another; and marginally also of
- covert speeches (soliloquies and songs) addressed by a character to oneself and addresses to the recipient (asides, monologues) by characters or meta-characters (such as a narrator, a stage producer, a Greek chorus, or a 'prologue').

The core text may be exclusively poetry or prose or only predominantly so. The peripheral text consists of such things as the following:

- indications of the segmenting of the text (say, into acts and scenes);
- identification of and assignment of speakers for main and bit parts (there may of course be silent parts in addition);
- acting directions (concerning exists, entries, stage movements and positions, stage business, speech delivery and the like);
- dancing and music directions;
- setting directions (concerning curtain, scenery, decor and the like);
- character descriptions (concerning age, sex, station in life, kinship or the like—presented at the beginning of the text or in a dispersed manner); and

(marginally) what could be called mental staging directions (such as 'two years later' or 'so and so is visible only to so and so' or even 'when the curtain opens so-and-so has just left and the stage is vacant').

Some of these elements are probably exemplified in every play text (such as overt speeches, segmenting, speaker assignment, exits) while others are found only in some play texts (for example, covert speeches, character descriptions). One must bear in mind that the overt status of any input need not wholly coincide with the functions it actually fulfils. Thus, a narration or a description may be disguised as overt dialogue, stage directions may be built into the core text (as with Shakespeare's so-called 'rhetorical' punctuation for the actor's benefit), character descriptions may be read as casting directions (but need not be—the age or sex of a part need not correspond to the actual age and sex of the actor playing that part, one actor may play more than one part or even all the parts, less commonly one part may be played by more than one actor).

Next come acting and the stage as inputs to the play as a happening. Acting consists in:

the delivery of the text with appropriate diction (articulations, transitions, pauses, breath control, tempo, rhythm), intonation (control of pitch and loudness and voice quality, use of whisper), and vocal gesture (such as sigh, laugh, sob, shriek); stage positions (the overall 'composition' of the actors at a given point in the play—it is called the *mise en scène*) and movements (exit, entry, crossing, hiding, jumping down, etc., freezing, simulated moving to another scene, etc.); actions (such as wiping one's glasses, lifting, drinking from a glass, sitting down, sitting up), postures (such as lying supine, stooping, hands akimbo), and gestures (such as jumping for joy, nodding or waving assent, stamping one's foot, hugging)—all these involving limb and trunk joints, and the simulation of actions and speech; casting (for age, sex, voice quality, presence, etc.), bearing (mode of movement, action, posture, gesture—stiff, easy-going, 'feminine', etc.), facial play (eyes and eye-contact, face direction, brows, nose, mouth, jaw), and simulation of body states (blindness, lameness, drunkenness, shiver, fainting, pain, fatigue, old age, weeping, blushing, etc.).

It is possible that a given item may function differently in different contexts—thus, lighting a match (or its simulation) may be an action that makes some difference or may simply be an idle gesture.

When we speak of the stage, we are simply referring to the basic lay-out (size, shape, level, etc.) of the on-stage area, the off-stage area, the with-stage area (for instrumentalists, for example), and the back-stage area (for prompters, lighting men, etc.) and their relation to the audience area (in full view, hidden, marginal, raised, with free access, within hearing distance, etc.) and to the surrounding space (open to a daytime sky, walled in, etc.). The well-known stage types such as the proscenium stage, the apron stage, intimate theatre, garden, fairground, street, arena theatre illustrate the possibilities of the lay-out.

Literary theatre is of course distinct from spectacle theatre, dance theatre, and music theatre. A play text or even a play production may be quite devoid of spectacle, dance, or music. But it is also possible that a play incorporates one or more of these elements as vehicle material. In other words spectacle, dance, and music are optional elements. Music may be on-stage or off-stage or with-stage, spectacle and dance are naturally always on-stage. Spectacle in drama consists in:

- acrobatics, swordsmanship, or the like, and coordinated group movements (not amounting to dance); costume (including on-stage disguise and masquerade as typically found in comic or farcical pieces), jewellery, make-up (including masks, wigs), and costume properties (such as a lady's fan, a sword, eye-glasses, a smoking pipe)—note that all these elements may be used for simulation of age, sex, appearance;
- hand properties (such as a lap dog, a child's pram, a portable light, a dinner set);
- scenery, drapery, and scene properties (curtains, backdrops, 'flats', chairs, tables, wall clocks, and the like, their simulations—together constituting the scene or set or stage setting, scene shifts);
- simulation of material (glycerine tears, dye blood, rain, snow), light effects (simulation of early morning, spot-lighting, or the like), sound effects (the report of a gun, the blowing of wind, the hum of a busy street, or the like), and simulation of a crowd, a procession, a ghost, etc.

Music in drama may be:

- vocal or instrumental;
- abstract or verbal;
- on-stage (delivered in association with the core text) or off-stage

(such as music for recreating an atmosphere, creating a mood, indicating segments, etc.).

Dance in drama may be:

abstract or representational;
incorporating music in a major way or not;
in close or loose association with the core text.

Dance of course may incorporate its own spectacular and musical elements. Music in drama is perhaps more widespread than dance in drama.

Finally, we have to consider reception as an input to the play as a happening. It is commonly recognized (and rightly so) that a play is not a play without the involvement of the recipient. It is true that in a sense such is the case with any work of art. But the degree and mode of this involvement differ according as the work of art is more an object on view (such as a painting or a sculpture) or more an object in use (such as an embroidered wrap or a streamlined car body or even a 'lived-in' house or temple) or more an activity (such as a theatre play or a harvest dance). In this last case the involvement will make a significant difference to the work of art—the recipient's response may feed back into and affect the performance, it may even become a part of the work of art. (We shall return to this point later on.) The recipient's response may consist in:

sensory response (listening, viewing);
ideational response (comprehension of language, literary, dramatic, music, and dance conventions);
other covert responses (responding to the presence of the actors, of co-present recipients, etc.); and
overt responses (such as smile, laughing, weeping, handclap, encore).

The overt response need not figure in every play-happening. The absence of an overt response may itself constitute a response of a sort.

To sum up, a theatre play is a happening in which there were three main bodies of input:

the literary input (the play text, especially the core text);
the staging input (acting and the stage; also spectacle, music, or dance,); and

the reception input (covert and overt responses).

This description, with due modifications, (see Table 2) can be applied to other varieties of play production—the street play, the television play, the radio play, the sit-around play-reading, or even a silent play-reading.

THE PLAY IS A BECOMING

If we now consider the scheduling of this happening as well as the decision-making set-up behind it, we come to realize that the play only progressively defines itself. The play is quite truly a becoming. It is a becoming in the obvious sense that it is not complete and fully defined till the performance comes to an end, but then the same is the case with any work of art whose reception is structured over time. (One could almost say jokingly—Call no play successful till you've seen it through the end!) The play is a becoming also in a less obvious but equally pertinent sense. The text is no template, die, or mould with the production being a copy made from this. The journey of the play from the composition of the text through its production to the final reception is not simply a matter of its transmission from the author of the text to the recipient but rather its progressive creation for and in the end even by the recipient.

One could understand this progressive creation in terms of the following phases:

- I. the composition of the text of the play,
- II. the preparation of the staging script of the play,
- III. the staging of the play,
- IV. the mental staging of the play.

Each play-happening has to pass through these phases. The play defines its identity, becomes what it is as it passes through the four phases. In actuality the text or (even more likely) the staging script need not be reduced to writing at all—it may simply be handed down through oral tradition. The undertaking of a production may have a characteristic social and cultural ambience such as hereditary, amateur, or professional, patronage or business or community solidarity. The staging may have a characteristic social and cultural ambience such as being associated with a festival or with a royal court. The end product at the conclusion of each of the first three phases need not have a determinate shape—there may be a feedback from a subsequent phase. Thus, the text or (even more

likely) the staging script may be perfected in a sit-around play-reading or a staging rehearsal; the staging proper or even the staging script may benefit from the audience response. The end product at the conclusion of each of the last three phases need not be predeterminate in shape—there may be improvisation on points that the preceding phases have left undefined or open or there may even be departures from points that have already been defined. As a result of this lack of fixity, different mental stagings or even different stagings or even different staging scripts originating from the same text constitute at best a family of play-happenings rather than happenings of the same play. Recognizing this seems to be the only reasonable way of resolving the problem of self-identity of a dramatic piece. (For an 'idealized' format for a staging script see Table 3.)

It is easy to see now how the passing from one phase to the next is neither wholly recapitulative or repetitive nor wholly additive or instrumental. There is a spiral progression as it were—the four phases variously perform four functions:

- i. Germination/Rumination,
- ii. Infolding/Unfolding,
- iii. Projection/Introjection,
- iv. Rendition/Recognition.

While the creation-production of the play on the part of the author and associated artists proceeds from germination through infolding and projection to rendition, the reception-recreation of the play on the part of the recipient and his associates proceeds in the reverse direction from recognition through introjection and unfolding to rumination. The sequence in either case is chiefly logical and only roughly chronological with a fair amount of overlap and backtracking. Germination is the conception and germination of the seed action or the seed idea or the seed image. Infolding is a sort of packing in of the feeder actions, ideas, or images—characters, actions, scenes, relationships, turns and counterturns, and so forth. Projection is putting these across or rather embodying these in ways that make for the following qualities:

1. Sufficiency:
 - 1.1 Recognizability of representation: verisimilitude, clarity of intention and affect.
 - 1.2 Respondability of presentation: presence, mutuality of rapport between the actors and the recipient;

2. Delectability: unity, perfection, richness, openness (i.e. inviting indeterminateness).

Sufficiency ensures that the recipient will enter the dramatic world and delectability that he will never quite wholly leave it behind. (These two qualities correspond to *pratibhāsa* and *ujjvalatā* of the ancient Indian thinkers on art.) Recognizability without respondability is simple mimicry. Respondability without recognizability is simple allure. Full sufficiency is both. Rendition, in addition to the rendering of what has been infolded, brings into play devices for framing and segmenting the work of art and differentiating it sufficiently from the practical world into which the happening is immersed.

We have so far considered the scheduling of the happening of a play. Now we shall consider the decision-making set-up behind this happening. This can best be understood in terms of successive rôles. Unlike certain other art forms for which one can think of only two rôles, the creator-producer and the recipient-recreator, the dramatic art forms call for the splitting of the rôle of the creative-productive artist into three. So there is a total of four successive rôles:

- A. The author who composes the text,
- B. The director who prepares the staging script,
- C. The player who performs the staging,
- D. The recipient who performs the mental staging.

The two 'middlemen', the director and the player, have an ambiguous status in that they are at once producers (if not creators) like the author and interpreters (if not recreators) like the recipient. As might be expected there is a fair amount of variation in the social distribution of the four rôles. Thus, the author may also be the director; the director may also be the player; the rôle of the author may be filled by a single person, a chain of two (original author and adaptor or translator), or a team holding a theatre workshop; the director's rôle may be filled by a single person or a chain of three (the producer, the director proper, and the stage-manager); the author and the director may have helpers such as the song-writer, the music director, the dance director, and the set and costume designer; the player's rôle is normally filled by a troupe of on-stage actors (though single-actor staging is not unknown) and off-stage or with-stage or back-stage assistants (that look after prompting, make-up, lighting, sound, properties, and so on); the recipient's rôle is normally filled by an assembly of recipients with a characteristic social and cultural

profile; and so forth. The social relations between the various rôles may vary a good deal in terms of who pays whom, who has what rights against and obligations towards whom, who defers to whose judgement, who is jealous of whom, and so forth. Interesting and practically operative as these complications are, they need not detain us further since they do not make a difference to the over all theoretical framework which constitutes our present concern. We are concerned with the content and scheduling of the artistic decisions and not with their 'natural history' so to say.

It is obvious that not all decisions concerning the happening of a play make the same amount of difference to the becoming of a play—that is, to the interpretative identity and the aesthetic quality of the play. The various decisions thus differ in the degree of their creativity. Accordingly one may recognize four degrees of creative participation in the happening of a play, namely:

- a. Creation,
- b. Co-creation,
- c. Sub-creation,
- d. Recreation.

Again, there is a fair amount of variation in the distribution of creative participation among the four rôles noted earlier. Thus in a 'writer's theatre' the author makes most of the decisions in respect of germination, infolding, projection, and rendition and gives us a very full, rich text; in a 'director's theatre' the director is the co-creator of the play, in extreme cases he may even be the creator and the author may be relegated to the co-creator's status; in an 'actor's theatre' the actor may gain the co-creator's status; the degree of initiative left to the recipient may also vary over a range.

Perhaps in view of these variations in the distribution of creative participation, it may be helpful for our understanding of the becoming of a play to postulate a 'normal' schedule as it were. This schedule will be normal not in the sense that it will be 'aesthetically ideal' or 'socio-culturally ideal' or 'commonly prevailing' but rather in the sense that it will be such as would permit an economical statement of variations in the schedule. This normal schedule will provide for a normal distribution of creativity. (See Table 4 for the normal schedule).

Actual schedules can then be conveniently described either as 'normal' or as departures from the normal in certain ways to certain degrees. When a recipient recreates the play entirely through reading he may be said to 'usurp' the rôles of the director and the

player—thus, in imaging a character in the theatre of the mind he should be capable of carrying out mentally the jobs of casting, costume-designing, make-up, and so on. Such capability will presuppose some prior exposure to actual stagings of some actual plays. Richard Burton says that the theatre is always the ‘writer’s theatre’ and directors are “no more than jumped-up stage managers” (Richard Burton 1970: p. 21). Where this is indeed the situation one will have to credit the director with no more than sub-creation in respect of infolding and projection—this may indeed happen in actuality either because the author’s text is almost a staging script (we could in that event call it a proto-staging-script) or because the players are to be credited with co-creation in respect of infolding no less than projection. The director may impose an interpretation on the text in order to tease out some of its hidden possibilities. (For example, an attempt to stage *Hamlet* in modern dress and mode of staging is intended to bring out its ‘modern’ elements.) And so on and so forth.

It is only sober common sense to realize that the conceptual apparatus presented here has been partially anticipated by our predecessors in both Indian and Western drama lore on whose shoulders we stand. Thus Classical Sanskrit offers dramaturgical terminology such as the following:

- I *kavikarma*, *pāṭhya-nirmāṇa* (composition)
- II–III *prayoga* (production)
- IV *āsvādana* (reception, delectation)
 - i (in I) *mānasikriyā* (germination)
 - ii–iv (in I) *alaṅkāraṇakalpa* (adequation)
 - ii–iv (in II–III) *prayogālaṅkāra* (adequation)
 - iii (in III) *kṣepaṇa* (projection)
 - i (in IV) *čarvaṇā* (rumination)
 - ii (in IV) *samārādhana* (unfolding)
 - iii (in IV) *samarpaṇa* (introjection)
 - iv (in IV) *anukirtana* (recognition)
- A *nāṭya-kāvi* (author)
- B *nāṭyācārya* (director)
- C *naṭavṛnda* (player-team)
- D *prekṣakasamāja* (recipient-assembly)
- a *kārayitṛi-pratibhā-vyāpāra* (creation)
- d *bhāvayitṛi-pratibhā-vyāpāra* (re-creation)

The present analysis has important implications for the evaluative activity of the critic in relation to drama. (This drama critic may be

hidden in the author, the director, the player, and the recipient and make a difference to their participation in the happening of a play.) When one is said to be evaluating a dramatic text in purely literary terms, one is paying attention only to the rôles of the author and the recipient. If the critic is doing his job properly, he will be evaluating the text as a script for mental staging. The text will demand to be mentally staged rather than be simply read as literature, and therefore demand to be evaluated for its dramatic possibilities. When one evaluates a text for its theatrical possibilities, one is assessing it as if it is a staging script—one would, for example, deem it to be 'good theatre'. When one evaluates the production of a given text by a given director-player team one is evaluating their staging script as such. When one evaluates an actual staging, one is evaluating not only the staging but also the audience's participation—their mental staging. Just as a staging may fall short of a text, an audience may fail a staging. Indeed one cannot overlook the possibility that a text may fall short of a director-player team (that may succeed in 'rescuing' the text) or that a director-player team may fall short of the audience.

To sum up, a play only becomes a play as it is worked over by persons playing varying creative roles in performing the function of taking it from germination to rendition and then back from recognition to rumination and thus taking it through the different phases from text composition to mental staging. Our evaluation of drama requires a clearer recognition of this becoming of a play through its different phases.

THE PLAY IS NOT A SINGLE THEATRE FORM

We have already recognized two theatre forms under drama—poetic drama (or poetry theatre) and prose drama (or prose theatre). These terms are not entirely satisfactory. But the distinction that they hint at is an important one. (We have underplayed the distinction so far just because we were keen on first describing drama or literary theatre as such.) The distinction between the two theatre forms runs through the whole process of the becoming of a play in all its phases. They are not merely two genres within drama but two art forms. Quite a few of the confusions in drama theory proceed from an illegitimate extrapolation from poetry theatre to prose theatre or from prose theatre to poetry theatre at the risk of ignoring the important differences between the two.

Let's begin by taking up the dramatic possibilities of the text of the play. The text of poetic drama is likely to be exclusively or

predominantly in verse, though it could be wholly or predominantly in prose. (Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* is a poetic drama in prose.) The text of prose drama is likely to be exclusively or predominantly in prose, though it could be wholly or predominantly in verse. (Molière's *Le Misanthrope* is a prose drama in verse.) The crucial difference between the two theatre forms at the level of the text clearly lies elsewhere than in the choice of verse and prose. The difference lies in the differing uses of language for which, for want of readily available terms, let's coin the terms mythocentric and logocentric. Poetic drama texts (in common with texts of myths, sacred rites, magical spells, some prose, and most poetry) make a mythocentric use of language, while prose drama texts (in common with everyday conversation, discursive dialogues, some poetry, and most prose literature) make a logocentric use of language. (The distinction will be seen to be not quite the same as that between poetry and prose.) The difference between these two uses of language is threefold:

1. the degree and kind of stylization: mythocentric language is speech no doubt but it is heightened speech; logocentric language captures everyday conversation at its liveliest and at its most perceptive;
2. the degree and mode of symbolism: mythocentric language goes all out for symbols whether explicit implicit or tacit; logocentric language is more subdued in its symbolism—more sparing and less overt (Kelkar 1987);
3. the linguistic handling of what we have called the germination-rumination function: mythocentric language emphasizes the mystery, the transcendent quality, of the deeper meanings of the text; logocentric language emphasizes the discussibility, the immanent quality of the deeper meanings of the text.

Secondly, we come to the production of the staging script and the directorial decisions and interpretations underlying the staging script. (Whether the staging script is a written script or a rich text being used like a staging script or only some marginal scribbles in the director's copy of the text or a portion of traditionally handed down lore or quite simply a bunch of more or less organized thoughts in the director's head is of course irrelevant to our present concern.) Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (ch. 16.73, 74, 81) makes a useful distinction between *nāṭyadharmin* elements (those that one would today call stylized, innovative, or decorative elements) and *lokadharmin* elements (those that one would today call illusionistic, tradi-

tionally familiar, or local-colour elements) and argues that a staging (*prayoga*) to be satisfactory is in need of both kinds. The fact remains, however, that poetic drama goes better with *nāṭyadharmin* elements and with music, dance, and *nāṭyadharmin* spectacle, and that prose drama goes better with *lokadharmin* elements and with *lokadharmin* spectacle. (Brecht's so-called Epic Theatre was peculiar in that it sought to use more of *nāṭyadharmin* elements in what was essentially a prose theatre. The fact, on the other hand, that dance theatre, music theatre, poetry, and myth are much closer to poetry theatre than to prose theatre is nothing peculiar. For similar reasons the novel and cinema are closer to the prose theatre.)

Thirdly, we come to the staging itself and the contribution of the players (both actors and off-stage assistants) to the staging. The acting and the supporting elements of costume, stage setting, and the stage lay-out (the position of the various areas) in poetic drama will be such that the staging will promote distance from the audience, heightening of speech, saying rather than showing (Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet poetizing about their love or about the sunrise), mystification, and involvement without identification. (For example, simulation of speech or of stage business is welcome.) In prose drama these elements will be such that the staging will promote intimacy with the audience, liveliness of speech, showing rather than saying ('betraying' emotions in speech and its delivery with appropriate postures, gestures, casting, bearing, and simulation of body states), demystification, and identification (even complicity) without involvement. (For example, the whole Stanislavsky 'method' of acting.) The correlation of the staging modes in poetic and prose drama with the stage lay-out needs closer study: over the years poetic drama has made effective use of the arena stage, the proscenium stage, the apron stage, as well as the fair ground, and prose drama has made effective use of the fourth-wall proscenium stage (Europe, circa 1880–1920), the intimate theatre, as well as the street theatre. Another correlation that deserves study is the one with the two modes of acting: in one mode the actor lets the 'lines' come through himself and his delivery and in the other mode the actor 'uses' the 'lines' in order to put himself across through them (Dawson 1970: p. 4). (Recall the discussion of sufficiency in projection earlier.)

Finally, we come to the mental staging and audience response. The crucial point here is the degree and mode of audience participation that is called for and encouraged in the two theatre forms. The ancient Indian thinkers on art spoke both of *tādātmya* (identification), *tallīnatā* (involvement), *pratibhāna* (illusion) on the one hand and *avadhāna* (awareness), *tātasthya* (detachment). *sāk-*

śibhāva (onlooker status) on the part of the recipient, and emphasize the need for combining the two ingredients in the recipient's response. Being less illusionistic and more stylized, demanding involvement rather than identification and a willingness to be mystified, poetic drama will call forth one kind of imaginative effort on the part of the assembly of recipients. Being more intent on showing rather than saying, demanding identification rather than involvement, and aiming at demystification, prose drama will call forth another kind of imaginative effort on the part of the assembly of recipients. ('How many children had Lady Macbeth?' would have been a more relevant question if *Macbeth* had been a prose drama.)

Traditionally certain kinds of content material have been associated with poetic drama and certain other kinds with prose drama. (This observation applies to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* also to the extent that we could correlate his term *rūpaka* with drama and *nāṭaka* with poetic drama. The remaining nine kinds of *rūpaka* appear to belong to prose theatre and perhaps to spectacle theatre. Shūdraka's play *Mṛcchakatikam* breaks this scheme in that it is a uniquely extant *nāṭaka* that is a prose drama in Classical Sanskrit.)

Poetic drama is associated with what Aristotle calls (in *Poetics*, ch. 2) characters that are "better than in real life", with royal and aristocratic characters, with mythology and romance, with the heroic and erotic motives, with celebration and ritual, with tragedy, with a religious attitude. Prose drama is associated with what Aristotle calls (in *Poetics*, ch. 2) characters that are "worse (than in real life), or as they are", with plebeian or bourgeois characters, with comedy or farce, with satire and problem plays, with discussion and public awakening. Perhaps we can say that poetic drama, like religion, "enable[s] man to endure existing" and to live with contradictory insights and that prose drama, like philosophy, "offer[s] man the prospect of comprehending existence" and resolving painful contradictions. (Cf. Watts 1955: section IV; when Watts speaks of 'drama' he's really speaking of only 'poetic drama'.)

However these traditional associations shouldn't be pressed too far. Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* is a poetic problem play and Chekhov's prose theatre embeds certain content elements that we normally associate with poetry theatre.

There are other problems. Where does melodrama fit in? It seeks to elicit both identification with the characters and involvement with the action. Are there folk and popular versions of poetry theatre and of prose theatre? Or are folk and popular theatre by and large relatively more verbalized versions of spectacle theatre and thus neither poetry theatre nor prose theatre? Does this last observation apply to melodrama also?

But then it is only sober common sense to realize that what an analysis of the present sort claims to accomplish is not so much the answering of all the questions as the posing of newer or better-phrased questions.

To sum up, the play is not a single theatre form but two. Poetry drama and prose drama differ significantly and vitally from each other in all phases of the becoming of a play and probably also at the level of content material.

THE PLAY IS NOT A SIMPLE THING

It should have become abundantly clear by now that the play is not by any means a simple thing. The elephant is just far too big and so we should not cavil overmuch at the apparently chaotic state and highly fragmentary or opinionated character of the larger part of the body of writing about drama and theatre. One hopes that the conceptual framework presented here will not only help us to make better sense of these opinions and controversies than it has been possible before but also to rephrase more adequately some of the central issues and points of dispute concerning drama and theatre and to resolve satisfactorily some of the minor puzzles concerning drama and theatre. Some examples follow before we conclude.

First let's take up the agenda of some of the central questions concerning theatre in general and literary theatre (or drama) in particular. (We have sought to exclude questions that concern all art or many art forms including theatre forms.)

1. Can drama be considered as a way of telling a story? As a mode of narration? Now stories can be either *factive-realis* (documentary, history) or *factive-irrealis* (myth, allegory) or *fictive-realis* (realistic fiction) or *fictive-irrealis* (romance). (These two divisions, *factive/fictive* and *realis/irrealis* have of course been borrowed from students of folklore.) What kind of stories is drama best at telling? Aristotle prefers (*Poetics* ch. 24) 'probable impossibilities' to 'improbable possibilities' in a plot. To what kind of drama does this apply? Which has priority—recognizability or delectability?
2. What is the relationship between story, plot and action? Between these and character? Between plot and character on the one hand and theme and ideas on the other? Between these various elements and the recipient's response? Identification? Involvement? Detachment?
3. Why choose the drama form rather than any of the other art forms? Whose medium is it anyway? The author's, the director's,

- or the player's? What is the recipient's rôle?
4. How is the dramatic world created? Once created, is everything within the play significant? Is anything that is not within the play without significance? Is anything that is not fully determinate within a character or the story or the theme significant? In what way?
 5. Does dramatic action necessarily demand unity and boundedness? In particular, does it demand conflict and its resolution? And a salient end in the form of a sudden turn (that is, catastrophe in the technical sense) or of a consummation?
 6. What is the meaning of a play considered as a happening or even as a becoming? Is it a celebration of the constants of human life? Or a therapy for the trials and travails of life? Or a patterned action—a choreography of character and event? Or a dispelling of illusion? Or an insightful sounding of life? Aristotle's idea of catharsis in tragedy and the later notion of comic catharsis could be regarded as kinds of therapy. Brecht's idea of the function of a theatre has both an element of therapy (dispelling inaction) and an element of education (dispelling of illusion).
 7. In what way can drama and the dramatic quality enter into other forms such as the so-called 'closet play' (as Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*), lyric poetry, cinema, the Socratic dialogue, even painting (as with El Greco or Amrita Sher Gill?)
 8. In adapting a novel to the stage what is gained and what is lost? Why is adapting a play into a novel far less common? (Similar questions could be raised about drama and cinema.)
 9. Can there be a good play that is not good theatre? If so, how come? And good theatre that is not a good play? If so, how come?

Finally, a rapid survey of some minor puzzles concerning theatre and drama:

1. A play text is a text of the kind that demands performance. A play unacted remains somehow incomplete: just how? And yet a given performance may fail to make the play text complete: when does it fail?
2. Does the director-player team 'interpret' the play in the same sense in which the playgoer watching the staging does or in which the reader mentally staging the play directly from the text does? Can the reader accomplish this feat without any prior exposure to the theatre?
3. What is the relationship of the director to the team of actors and assistants—especially the actors? Is he the demanding guru

expecting discipline in return for security and squeezing the performance out of them? Or is he the friendly team captain offering freedom in return for a measure of responsibility and releasing the potentialities in the performers?

4. Should the members of the player's team operate like professional specialists or like versatile amateurs?
5. In what way and for what reasons do acting and directing in cinema differ from those in drama? (And who is chiefly responsible for 'projection' in cinema—the director-photographer/sound-recorder/film-editor/sound-editor chain or the actor?)
6. When a literary critic responding to the text of a play sees significance in the minutiae of the causal sequence (as in a detective novel) or the verbal imagery (as in poetry), could we object that such suggestions will hardly be noticed in the performance (unless the recipient already knows the play well)? Or could we defend their relevance on the ground that the playgoer will respond to them without being aware of them? (Cf. Dawson 1970: p. 39)
7. Is the arousal of feelings in the recipient more pronounced with a play than with a piece of narrative prose or poetry? Why? How does this affect questions of obscenity or public arousal and awakening?

There is no question about it—the play is not only complicated but also complex, especially because it is not a thing but a complicated happening and a complex becoming. (See Table 5 for a conspectus of the being of a play—Tables 1–5 on pp. 30–34.) □

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Table 1
Theatre Forms

| | <i>Poetry theatre</i> (poetic drama) | <i>Prose theatre</i> (prose drama) | <i>Spectacle theatre</i> |
|-------------|---|--|--|
| I. Material | even vehicle-content balance | even vehicle-content balance | even vehicle-content balance |
| a. Vehicle | i. more activity than object status ii. more verbal than audio-visual or audial reception over space-time or time iii. employing of interpreted gesture, delivered word as poetry, and possibly music, etc. | i. more activity than object status ii. more verbal than audio-visual or audial reception over space-time or time iii. employing of interpreted gesture, delivered word as prose, and possibly music, etc. | i. more activity than object status ii. more visual than audio-verbal or audial reception over space-time iii. employing of interpreted gesture, and possibly delivered word as poetry or prose, music, etc. |
| b. Content | man's life among men, especially in face-to-face interaction, possibly in greater breadth and penetration | man's life among men, especially in face-to-face interaction, possibly in greater breadth and penetration | man's life among men, especially in face-to-face interaction, possibly in more limited breadth and penetration |
| 2. Medium | i. dramatic moves—including dramatic communication moves ii. operating within dramatic scene over dramatic time and iii. sustaining and sustained by a dramatic world | i. dramatic moves—including dramatic communication moves ii. operating within dramatic scene over dramatic time and iii. sustaining and sustained by a dramatic world | i. theatrical moves—including theatrical communication moves ii. operating within theatrical arena over theatrical time and iii. sustaining and sustained by a theatrical world |

Table 2
Inputs to the Play as a Happening

The Literary Input (the Text of the Play)

The Core Text (the word, poetry or prose, to be delivered on-stage or off-stage)

Overt speeches (to one another)

* Covert speeches (to oneself)

* Addresses to the recipient

The Peripheral Text (the accompanying staging directions)

Indications for segmenting and speaker assignment

Acting directions

* Directions for dancing, music, setting

* Character descriptions

* Directions for mental staging

The Staging Input (Implementing of the Text)

Acting

The delivery of the text with appropriate diction, intonation, vocal gesture

Stage positions and movements

* Actions, postures, gestures, and simulation of action and speech

* Casting, bearing, facial play, and simulation of body states

The Stage

*Spectacle, Music, and Dance

The Reception Input

Sensory Response

Ideational Response

Other Covert Responses

*Overt Responses

Note: Items not found universally are marked with an asterisk.

Table 3
An 'Idealized' Format for a Staging Script

The script will have a number of columns with the matter in each column to be read across in synchronized rows.

The column headings will be:

Estimated Real Time (Beginning With the Zero Hour)

Represented Time

Segmenting into Larger and Smaller Units

Scene Directions

Decor
Scene props
Light
Sound

Lines to be Delivered (Language Text)

with assignment to the major parts and the bit parts, indication of on-stage/off-stage
with delivery directions

Music and Dance Directions

Personal Directions: voice, bearing, casting, costume, jewellery, make-up directions; costume props; facial play

Mime Directions: movements, positions, *mise en scène* actions, posture, gestures; hand props

- Notes: 1. The general directions under Decor (descriptions and pictorial representations of one or more stage sets and the scene props) and Persona (part-wise descriptions and pictorial representations) may be brought in at the beginning or at the end.
2. The directions at each point will be from the author's text with the director's editing and elaboration and the lines will be from the author's text with the director's editing.
-

Table 4
The Becoming of a Play

| <i>The Rôles</i> | <i>The Functions</i> | | | | <i>The Phases</i> |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| | <i>i</i> <i>Germina- tion</i> <i>Rumina- tion</i> | <i>ii</i> <i>Infolding</i> <i>Unfolding</i> | <i>iii</i> <i>Projection</i> <i>Introjec- tion</i> | <i>iv</i> <i>Rendition</i> <i>Recogni- tion</i> | |
| A Author | a | b | c | d | I Composi- tion of the text |
| B Director | d | b | c | d | II Prepara- tion of the staging script |
| C Player | d | d | c | d | III Staging |
| D Recipient | d | d | d | d | IV Mental staging |

Note: The degrees of creative participation are (in a descending order): a creation, b co-creation, c sub-creation, d re-creation. Their distribution represents the normal schedule.

Table 5
The Being of a Play (a Dramatic Piece)

The Problem of Self-identity

The play is a becoming. Different mental stagings, different staging, different staging scripts originating from the same literary input (the text) at best constitute a family of play happenings of the 'same' play.

The Problem of Class-identity

The play is one of a family of theatre forms. It is recognized and responded to as either a poetic drama or a prose drama by virtue of its medium—it creates a dramatic world sustaining and being sustained by dramatic moves against a dramatic scene in dramatic time.

The Problem of Situs-of-existence

The play is not an object, a thing, so much as a spell of activity, a happening. It is a happening to whose existence at the level of material the literary input, the staging input, and the reception input contribute both vehicle and content.

The Problem of the Meaning of a Play

The play exists primarily at the level of the medium. As a work of art it is embedded in man's life. In the context of man's life it may be variously seen as a celebration, a therapy, a patterned action, a dispelling of illusion, or an insightful sounding of life.
