Chapter One

Introduction

Drama has always excited audiences with its elegant depiction of life in all its complexities, perplexities and anxieties. In spite of the multifarious technical innovations adopted by different playwrights over the centuries, this genre has always captivated the audiences in its thrall.

American drama flourished in the virgin soil of American Literature. Dramatists like Sam Shepard, Jack Gelber, David Mamet, Edward Albee and Neil Simon are some of the important dramatists who are known for their stupendous contribution to American drama. The serio-comic plays of Arthur Lee Kopit are different, in that their methods are uncommon and their themes exceptionally provocative. His plays depict the precarious predicament and anxiety of humanity in its frantic quest for meaning in a fragmented and chaotic world. Kopit dexterously dramatises the mental trauma of humanity constantly in confrontation with a world devoid of purposefulness. Kopit is characterised by his rare perceptive power of insight to discern and dramatise the eternal conflict of humanity in its struggle for emancipation.

Though most modern playwrights have perceived and dramatised the meaninglessness of existence and the absurdity of life, humanity is relentless in its struggle to liberate itself from the reality of existence. The American
playwrights do not conform to the basic commitment of absurdity like the European dramatists, especially the French who prefer to view life from existential premises but fail to look beyond it. They acknowledge the madness of the world in which human beings are helplessly trapped and hence abstain from giving humanity hopes for emancipation.

However, the cultural tendency of America does not regard human life as purposeless and absurd. The American dramatists indeed expose the ridiculous nature of the society and the individuals but do not consider the totality of subsistence and life in general as meaningless and purposeless. Americans are optimistic to believe that humanity and society can be changed and improved.

Arthur Lee Kopit is considered as an important contributor to contemporary American drama. His plays are best noted for their powerful social commentary and innovations in dramatic form. His earlier plays conform to the tradition of the absurd which is characterised by experimental techniques and the philosophical view of the absurdity of life. His later plays deal with contemporary subjects like the influence of the media, the mistaken human perception and the threat of nuclear proliferation. Arthur Lee Kopit has impacted the dramatic arena of American Literature with his shockingly unconventional plays which arrest the attention and provoke the imagination of the American playgoer.

The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary defines the word 'emancipate' as “to free from legal, social, political and legal restrictions” and it also means,
“to free from slavery”. The word has originated from the Latin word ‘emancipare’ which means ‘to transfer as property’.

The term ‘leitmotif’ is derived from the German term for “lead motif”. The term, ‘leitmotif’ was originally coined by Hans von Wolzuegen to designate a musical theme associated with a particular object, character, or emotion. For instance, the ominous music in Jaws plays whenever the shark is approaching. The particular score is the leitmotif for the shark. It is “a recurring device loosely linked with a character, setting, or event. It gives the audience a “heads-up” by calling attention to itself and suggesting that its appearance is somehow connected with its appearance in other parts of the narrative” (google.com).

Kopit has the rare potential to view the rotting underside of the society with a keen and critical eye. He sharply captures the endless struggle of humanity in its relentless effort to extricate itself from its predicament. His plays portray the fever and fret of humanity constantly grappling with its hostile environment of this existence. Mankind’s yearning desire to emancipate itself from this never-ending tussle is pointedly depicted by the playwright. Hence emancipation is ultimately a strong undercurrent in the dramatic oeuvre of Arthur Lee Kopit and it can be considered the leitmotif of his plays.

Kopit’s first play, The Questioning of Nick written during spring 1957 is about a teenage athlete, Nick, whose rebellious attitudes and his arrogance is
splintered by interrogation experts at the police headquarters. Nick is rejected by Black Angels, the local street gang, and as he tries desperately to impress the police, the officers expose and humiliate him as a nonentity. The play has serious overtones and Nick in a pathetic moment sinks in utter defeat and dismay. He desperately craves to be set free but finds himself incarcerated.

The Questioning of Nick is followed by plays like Don Juan in Texas (1957), On The Runway Of Life You Never Know What’s Coming Off Next (1958), Across the River and Into the Jungle (1958) Aubade (1959) and Sing to me Through Open Window (1959). The initial inclination in his plays for humorous satire is soon replaced by his dominant tendency for the tragic comic mode evident in his later plays.

Kopit’s Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feelin’ So Sad (1960) is a satirically absurd play which brought international attention and recognition for Kopit as a playwright. The play written during Kopit’s Harvard days is known for its memorable title. The play depicts the psychological imbalance of both Madame Rosepettle and her son, Jonathan.

Madame Rosepettle represents the decayed society and she emasculates all men around her including her son Jonathan. She is keen on setting right the follies of the society and she would not dare Jonathan get caught up in the snares of this world. Hence she imprisons Jonathan always in his room. But the
The stuttering, mentally retarded Jonathan breaks out of isolation and establishes his identity by killing his mother’s Piranha fish and Venus-flytraps. He tries to liberate himself also from the child seductress, Rosalie. When Rosalie finally attempts to seduce Jonathan in his own mother’s bed, Jonathan liberates himself by smothering Rosalie by her crumbled skirt. The bewildered Madame Rosepettle stands wondering at the meaning of Jonathan’s action at the end of the play.

George Wellwarth ascribes the popularity of the play, Oh Dad Poor Dad for being funny without even vaguely disturbing. The play won for Kopit both the Vernon Rice Award and the Outer Circle Award in 1962.

Oh Dad Poor Dad is a grotesque play which presents the wealthy widow, Madame Rosepettle and Jonathan touring the Caribbean Islands with the extensive luggage which incorporates the stuffed corpse of her late husband, Sir Edward Albert Robinson Rosepettle III. The play’s primary focus is on the male devouring women, Madame Rosepettle and Rosalie. Visible symbols like the Siamese kitten-eating silver Piranha fish and the carnivorous Venus-flytraps indicate Madame Rosepettle’s essential character. She locks her son up in the beach hotel suite in Havana for fear of being devoured by the wretched immoral world.

The irate possessiveness of Jonathan’s domineering mother stunts Jonathan’s mental growth and maturity. Jonathan is always made to spend time with his collection of stamps, coins and books with the promise of his mother that
he would become great some day in life. Though he is seventeen years old he is dressed like a ten year old and he also acts like a ten year old. His mother controls everything concerning Jonathan. Every moment of Jonathan’s life is carefully monitored by his dominant mother. Jonathan frankly discloses his mind to Rosalie in the absence of his mother and says:

JONATHAN. She tells me I’m brilliant. She makes me read and re-read books no one’s ever read. She smothers me with blankets at night in case of a storm. She tucks me in so tight I can’t even get out till she comes and takes my blankets off. (50)

Kopit depicts the mental trauma of suppression evident in Jonathan caused by his oppressive mother with her ‘good’ intentions. Jonathan is suffocated by his dominant mother and he yearns to be emancipated. The sound of the airplane flying overhead fascinates him and he improvises a telescope with the tube of a blow gun his mother had brought from her last hunting trip to Zanzibar and the lenses she had given Jonathan for the stamps. Images like ‘airplane’, ‘flying’ and ‘windows’ suggest his struggle for liberation.

Madame Rosepettle invites Commodore Roseabove to come into her room in the hotel. Commodore Roseabove professes his love for Madame Rosepettle. But Madame Rosepettle like a vampire sucks his soul out of him. She narrates to him the story of her life with her late husband Edward Albert Robinson
Rosepettle III and how Jonathan was born to her.

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. ... Twelve months later my son was born.

... I took him home and put him in a cage in the darkest corner of
my room. But still I —

THE COMMODORE. Was it a large cage?

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. What ?

THE COMMODORE. Was his cage large? I hope it was. Otherwise it
wouldn't be very comfortable.

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. I'm sorry. Did I say cage? (43)

Kopit makes Madame Rosepettle blurt out inadvertently how she had physically
fettered her son Jonathan by her reference to the 'cage'.

Madame Rosepettle declares herself as a woman in mourning whereas she
informs the Head Bellboy of the hotel that she does not wear black in the tropics
because of her health. Her health and welfare seem to overpower her emotions of
grief. Ironically, she insists that her bedroom in the hotel in Port Royal should be
draped with black velvet to ward off sunlight completely. She wishes to hide
behind her external façade of mourning and grief.

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. ... I'm in mourning. And while I'm here in
Port Royal, no single speck of sunlight shall enter and brighten the
mournful gloom of my heart — at least, not while I'm in my
bedroom. ... Tack the drapes across my windows and when my room is black, call me in. (8)

Madame Rosepettle shuts herself away from life and reality. Her dark bedroom symbolises the darkness of her soul. She makes nocturnal excursions to the beach to surprise and annoy couples making love under the blankets and kicks sand on their faces. Her cynical attitude to sex is probably due to the trauma of her own initiation into conjugal love-making on her nuptial night in which she was carelessly used and dismissed.

Kopit delineates the psychological bondages of Madame Rosepettle. In her struggle to emancipate herself, she tortures her husband while he is asleep and she sinks deeper into his mind in her quest to know the real intentions of his heart which eventually causes his heart attack. Her flirtation with Commodore Roseabove is her inner struggle against her suppressed self.

Rosalie, the seductive baby sitter is being spied upon by Jonathan through his telescope. Madame Rosepettle wants her son Jonathan to meet her and know for himself her real nature. But Rosalie is very deft in her design to seduce Jonathan in his mother’s bed. She tells him that she loves only Jonathan and says, “... I’m full of love and womanly feelings. I want children. Tons of them. I want a husband” (58). Kopit’s success in rendering Rosalie’s struggle to liberate herself from the social stigma of being a seductress into a woman of reputation is amply evident.
Asylum, or What the Gentlemen Are Upto, Not to Mention The Ladies (1963), later titled Chamber Music (1965), is essentially a study of paranoia and the play depicts the terror that tortures a deranged mind. The inmates of the ward for the insane assume identities of personalities like Osa Johnson, Gertrude Stein, Pearl White, Amelia Earhart, Joan of Arc and Susan B. Anthony. These women suffer from inner alienation and they presume a threat from the men’s ward. Chamber Music reflects the anxiety of people in the nuclear age.


Kopit’s critical insight of the legendary American West in Indians helps him bust the romantic myths and legends which glorify sordid political policies. Buffalo Bill is sympathetic to the Indians but he destroys the major food supply of the Indians by killing the buffaloes.

Kopit presents the dilemma of the Settlers in their tortured attempt to justify their behaviour. Gautam Dasgupta rightly avers:
In Indians he demonstrated that he was quite capable of acting as America’s social and political conscience during the worst of times. Without being dogmatic or overly pedantic he devised provocative theatrical forms to argue his perceptive social vision.

(251)

Wings underscores the frustration of linguistic non-communication, a recurrent theme which contributes to the major theme of emancipation evident in Kopit’s oeuvre. Though the play is originally intended to be a radio play, Kopit later expanded and adapted it for the stage. Emily Stilson, once an aviatrix and a wing-walker, suffers a left cerebral infarction and she is rendered aphasic. The play condenses her experiences into four scenes namely “Prelude”, “Catastrophe”, “Awakening” and “Explorations”.

Kopit conceives humanity’s relentless struggle with language for emancipation in Emily Stilson’s effort to articulate. Emily Stilson’s non-communication due to aphasia denotes her physical disability for social intercourse. Her tussle with articulation and identification of images and ideas is indeed her endeavour to emancipate herself and establish her identity.

Kopit’s plays portray the eternal inner struggle of humanity to emancipate itself from the fetters of life imposed on humanity in different levels of existence — personal, social and psychological. Suzanne Burgoyne Dieckman and Richard Brayshaw aptly observe, “... Kopit creates a theatrical world in which the
characters are imprisoned” (195). Kopit’s Characters demonstrate their yearning desire to emancipate themselves from personal, social and psychological shackles wreaked on them.

The second chapter of the thesis ‘Emancipation from Physical Fetters’ deals with the playwright’s perception of human beings bound by physical fetters. Kopit is imbued with a critical insight to discern the shortcomings of the individual human beings and he portrays the personal deformities, physical weaknesses, inabilities and imprisonment of his characters in his dramatic oeuvre.

Jonathan, the stuttering, mentally retarded son of the wealthy widow, Madame Rosepettle is always kept locked up in his room in the hotel suite at Port Royal. Madame Rosepettle is a tourist to the Caribbean Islands. She handles her son Jonathan just like a piece of her extensive luggage which also incorporates the stuffed corpse of her dead husband, Albert Edward Robinson Rosepettle III. Madame Rosepettle does not allow Jonathan to be part of her social life. Madame Rosepettle goes out in the middle of the night to the beach all alone, leaving poor Jonathan confined to his room with his collection of stamps, coins and rare books. Even when she invites Commodore Roseabove to come into her room, Jonathan is neither informed nor invited to meet Commodore Roseabove.

Jonathan’s personal disability of stuttering is rampant whenever he talks to his mother.
MADAME ROSEPETTLE. Edward, your fabulous collection of coins has just arrived as well. Now — where would you like it put?

JONATHAN. Ummmm—

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. Oh, great gods! Can’t you for once talk like a normal human being without showering the room with your inarticulate spit!?

JONATHAN. I-I-I-I—I—da—da—

MADAME ROSEPETTLE. Oh, very well. Very well — if you can’t muster the nerve to answer — stick out your paw and point. (9)

It is clearly evident that Jonathan is unable to communicate with his mother. Madame Rosepettle makes fun of Jonathan’s stammering as ‘inarticulate spit’. This communication fiasco between mother and son deters them from a healthy relationship. Jonathan seeks to find someone with whom he can open up his heart and talk freely. When Madame Rosepettle drives Rosalie out of the room by calling her “Slut, sleazy prostitute catching and caressing children and men” (25), Jonathan desperately tries to grab her hand and tells her in a whisper, “Come back again. Pa-please — come back again” (25).

Madame Rosepettle enumerates her unhappy wedded life with her later husband Edward Albert Rosepettle III when she invites Commodore Roseabove to her room. Madame Rosepettle even ignores Jonathan’s presence and callously tells him how she conceived Jonathan on her nuptial night. She continues to
describe Jonathan’s birth after twelve months and tells Commodore Roseabove that she hid Jonathan away from her husband in a ‘cage’ in the dark corner of her room. Commodore Roseabove expresses shock but Madame Rosepettle without any compunction of conscience continues that she meant only a ‘crib’. Evidently Jonathan has been given the treatment like her pet Piranha fish and Venus-flytraps.

Emily Stilson in Wings is rendered aphasic because of the stroke and she loses her power of meaningful communication. She is unable to correlate her thoughts with her words. When the Doctors want her to identify an object and give her a tooth brush, Emily Stilson’s response illustrates her total inability to communicate.

**DOCTOR.** ... Do you know what this object is called?

**MRS. STILSON (With great difficulty.)** Toooooooovvvv...bbbrum?

**DOCTOR.** Very good. Now put it down. *(She puts it down.)* Now, pretend you have it in your hand. Show me what you’d do with it. *(She does nothing)*

**DOCTOR.** Pick it up.

**MRS. STILSON.** *(As soon as she’s picked it up)* Tooovebram, tooove-britch baratch brush bridge, two-bridge.
DOCTOR. Show me what you do with it. *(For several moments she does nothing. Then she puts it to her lips, holds it there motionless.)* Very good. Thank you. (49)

Emily Stilson’s capacity for articulation for meaningful communication has failed her miserably. Memories of her vibrant youthful life as an aviatrix and wing-walker keep recurring in her mind again and she thinks that she has been captured after her plane crashed in a foreign country, probably Rumania. She is unable to cooperate with the Doctors and Nurses because of the loss of her potential for communication.

Emily Stilson is sent to Burke Rehabilitation Centre where Amy, the speech therapist, assists her. Emily Stilson gradually begins to recognise the ‘winter season’, ‘snow’ and ‘flying’ by the stupendous assistance of Amy. Kopit’s use of the dream metaphor, airplanes and flying suggests her emancipation from the bondages of physical existence into eternity.

Karl Gross calls *Indians* a “memory play”(89). In this play, Kopit satirically dramatises America’s greed and racism. Kopit paints the white man’s race for supremacy and the plight of the vanquished Indians. Kopit presents Geronimo, the War Chief of the Great Chiricahua Apaches for the Wild West Show in an iron cage. Geronimo declares,
... My body is painted with blood! I am red from white man’s BLOOD! ... NO ONE LIVES WHO HAS KILLED MORE WHITE MAN THAN I!

(BUFFALO BILL, in his fancy buckshkin, enters unnoticed by Geronimo; drum roll. He opens the cage door and walks inside).

... Slowly, BUFFALO BILL walks toward him. He stops just short of the Indian, the defiantly turns his back. ... GERONIMO stands trembling with frenzy. (34)

Kopit alludes to the personal bondages wrought up on the native Indians. Their lands had been taken away. Their buffaloes have been killed and they are forced to settle down in their reservations and are prevented from hunting for their food. But Geronimo’s speech discloses the Indian defiance and their struggle for emancipation which is a remote possibility.

The third chapter has been entitled as ‘Emancipation from Social Shackles’. Kopit’s dramatic oeuvre is characterised as powerful social commentary. He picturesquely portrays the rotting underside of the society. Human beings are stifled by social strictures from which they earnestly endeavour to emancipate themselves. Society oppresses the individual by its accepted norms and codes of conduct which when trespassed the individual is ostracised.
Rosalie in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* is employed as a baby-sitter and she looks after the children at the penthouse. She plays blind man's buff with them and she has been occasionally seen by people like Madam Rosepettle behind the bushes with the red headed fifteen year old boy with her skirt up. Jonathan, the mentally retarded and emotionally troubled son of Madame Rosepettle improvises a telescope and ultimately starts spying Rosalie to while away his time. Madame Rosepettle invites Rosalie to meet Jonathan. Rosalie is keen on seducing Jonathan and she tells him:

**Rosalie.** I love you, Jonathan, and I won't give you up. I want you... all for myself. Not to share with your mother, but for me, alone — to love, to live with, to have children by. I want you, Jonathan. You, whose skin is softer and whiter than anyone's I've ever known. Whose voice is quiet and whose love is in every look of his eye. I want you, Jonathan, and I won't give you up. (55)

Rosalie makes it very clear to Jonathan that she is in love with him and that she is not ready to share him with his mother. She has fallen in love with him and she yearns to have him as her husband because Jonathan's skin is soft and white, his voice is quiet and his eyes are full of love. Jonathan finally says that he would affirm his mother's view that Rosalie is dirty because she lets other men do whatever it please them to her. But Rosalie says that she loves only Jonathan and adds:

**Rosalie.** ... It's only you I love. They make no difference.
JONATHAN. You’re dirty! …

ROSALIE. No, I’m not dirty. I’m full of love and womanly feelings. I want children. Tons of them. I want a husband. Is that dirty? (58)

Rosalie desperately yearns to emancipate herself from the social stigma of being called a whore and become the spouse of a loving husband and the mother of many children. Her scheme to seduce Jonathan and consequently possess him completely for herself however crumbles and she is murdered by Jonathan.

Arthur Lee Kopit delineates the character of Madame Rosepettle very subtly with dramatic dexterity. As the play Oh Dad, Poor Dad opens Madame Rosepettle enters her hotel suite at Port Royal in Havana. She calls herself a tourist and declares to the world that she is in mourning. She is fabulously rich and she carries with her the stuffed corpse of her dead husband as part of her extensive luggage. She orders her bedroom to be completely draped in black to avoid sunlight. Kopit ironically makes her state:

I don’t wear black in the tropics for my health, my boy. I’m in mourning. And while I’m here in Port Royal, no single speck of sunlight shall enter and brighten the mournful gloom of my heart — at least, not while I’m in my bedroom. (8)

Madame Rosepettle does not want even a speck of sunlight to brighten the mournful gloom of her heart and continues saying at least while she is in her
bedroom. She is on tour to exotic destinations in the Caribbean Islands even while she is mourning for her late husband. She does not wear black because of her health. Her bedroom is always dark to signify that she is in mourning. But the playwright very adeptly busts her social milieu by revealing her vocation in her vacation. She goes to the beach in the midnight to disturb lovers making love under the blankets and kicks sand on their faces. She boasts of her exploits on the dreadful night when Jonathan killed Rosalie as well as Madame Rosepettle’s silver Piranha fish and Venus-flytraps and says:

Madame Rosepettle. Twenty-three couples. I annoyed twenty-three couples, all of them coupled in various positions, all equally distasteful. It’s a record, that’s what it is. It’s a record! (Breathing heavily from excitement and begins to tuck in her blouse and straighten her hair...). (59)

Kopit very easily exposes the moral depravity and decay of Madame Rosepettle. The darkness of her soul is a made conspicuous by the playwright’s dramatic insight.

Madame Rosepettle cannot resist her temptations when she sees the one hundred and eighty seven feet long pink yacht anchored in the harbour. She mumbles the name Roseabove over and over again. She spends a night with Commodore Roseabove in his pink yacht and she is obliged to invite him to visit her in her room. Commodore Roseabove is bowled over by her bewitching
beauty and he seldom realises the lurking serpent underneath. He is completely
emasculated by her and complains of asthma. He is afraid that he will have to
meet with the same fate as Edward Albert Robinson Rosepettle III if he is to stay
a little longer. Hence, Madame Rosepettle’s rendezvous with Commodore
Roseabove and her midnight visits to the beach are the manifestation of her
suppressed emotions and desires.

The Cherry Valley Country Club in Kopit’s The Day the Whores Came
Out to Play Tennis is owned by the executive members of the club who are the
direct descendants of the European immigrants. President Franklin Delano Kuvl
says:

So! My father founded this place. He and old Mr. Gayve. It was a
large yellow swamp and they bought it cheap. And filled it in.
Then planted some trees. Some grass. Planted some flowers ...

Built this house ... They had a dream, they said. (139, 140)

The executive committee members guarded the clubhouse from others and shared
it with their friends in order to maintain the Club. But they could not resist the
invasion from the outsiders and the dream it represented slipped by.

On a fine morning eighteen strange women come into the Cherry Valley
Country Club to play tennis in two Rolls Royces elegantly dressed. They soon
change over into their untraditional tennis clothes. The executive committee
gathers in the Nursery room to decide on the course of action they have to take as these women are not members of the club. Incidentally they are shocked to find that the telephone wires have been cut and their cars disabled so that they cannot contact the local police for help.

Rudolph, the Chairman of the Sports committee is sent to talk to the women and to get the women out of the Club because they are not members. Everyone gathered in the Nursery of the Club think that all the eighteen women are common whores. Rudolph comes back and tells them:

Rudolph. I figured they were whores, you know? So ... the first one I came to, I pinched on the ass. It was just a friendly gesture. Well, I guess she didn’t see it that way. Neither did her friends. So. Guess they aren’t whores. [He groans and clutches his head.] it’s not easy getting hit over the head by eighteen tennis rackets. [He laughs weakly]. (136)

The women start pounding the Nursery with the tennis balls and the Nursery building crumbles on the members of the executive committee. President Kuvl finally comments, “Well. So. Here we are. The committee. With nothing to do. ... But sit in the Nursery like little children ... and watch what we built collapse all about us” (140). The women have secured the help of Duncan, the English valet to demolish the Club and all its traditional values.
The fourth chapter ‘Emancipation from Psychological Bondages’ presents the psychological bondages of human beings which contribute to their pitiable predicament in this chaotic world as perceived by the playwright, Arthur Lee Kopit. Emily Stilson in Wings suffers a cerebral infarction and she becomes aphasic as the result of the stroke. She is unable to correlate her thoughts with her verbal vocabulary to effect meaningful communication. She remembers her youthful aviation feats being an aviatrix and a daring wing-walker. Memories of her vibrant past keep recurring to her mind and she helplessly associates her present situation with her past.

In her mind, Emily Stilson is convinced that her plane has crash-landed in Rumania. She thinks that she has been captured by the enemy and kept in a farmhouse masqueraded as a hospital. She decides not to divulge any information to her captors. Hence, she is unable to cooperate with the Doctors and Nurses of the hospital. She surmises that the hospital staff around her speak to her in Rumanian and she does not want to reciprocate to them freely.

FIRST DOCTOR. Mrs. Stilson, makey your naming powers?

MRS. STILSON. What?

SECOND DOCTOR. Canju spokeme?

MRS. STILSON. Can I what?

FIRST DOCTOR. Can do peeperear?

MRS. STILSON. Don’t believe what’s going on!
SECOND DOCTOR. ahwill.

FIRST DOCTOR. Pollycadjis.

SECOND DOCTOR. Sewyladda? (45)

Emily Stilson’s suspicions are endorsed by what she hears the Doctor say. The Doctors are convinced that Emily Stilson does not hear herself. The loss of the power of communication makes Emily Stilson feel alienated in the society. She feels herself estranged from her fellow human beings. Kopit portrays the inner struggle of Emily Stilson to identify different objects around her so that she can regain her power of effective communication.

Emily Stilson narrates the dream she had to Amy the speech therapist. In her dream, Emily Stilson has seen a person, she could not tell whether it was man or woman, come into her room and talk to her. Emily Stilson narrates further and tells Amy, “Then ... I left my body” (74). Emily Stilson has undergone a supernatural experience. Kopit seems to imply the liberation of Emily Stilson from the clutches of this world into eternity.

Kopit, in Indians, delves deeper into the psychology of the native Indian mind. The Government of the United States of America sends a committee to investigate the grievances of the Indians in the Standing Rock Reservation. Senator Logan, Senator Dawes and Senator Morgan try to elicit from the Indians what the Indians did not get which the Great Father has promised them. John Grass responds to the committee on behalf of the Indians and tells the committee
that the Great Father has not fulfilled his promises. Kopit skilfully dramatises the attachment of the Indians to their land thinking that the land is sacred and that land cannot be bought or sold. The Western Settlers have bought the land from the native Indians for a cheap price and have promised them better living conditions and food. The Indians have given the Black Hills and expect to receive whatever they would ever need. The buffaloes have been killed and the major food supply of the Indians has been destroyed. The Indians have been deprived of not only their land but also their basic necessities.

The Great Father does not want to give the Indians money because they get drunk. But John Grass humorously replies that the Indians only imitate the white man in getting drunk. Kopit exposes the hypocrisy of the white man in exploiting the psychological freedom of the native Indians.

Jonathan in Oh Dad, Poor Dad is depicted as the mentally retarded son of Madame Rosepettle. He is seventeen years of age but he acts like a ten year old. His domineering mother has controlled every facet of his life and has stunted his mental capabilities. He is always locked up in his room away from any contact with fellow human beings. He is always found in the company of his collection of stamps, coins and rare books and his mother’s silver Piranha fish and Venus-flytraps. He is never given a chance for any human interaction.

Jonathan is fascinated by the airplane and he improvises a telescope to have a closer look at the airplane. When the airplane flies away, Jonathan starts
spying on Rosalie with the telescope. Madame Rosepettle invites Rosalie to visit Jonathan so that Jonathan can understand her real nature. Madame Rosepettle has seen Rosalie behind the bushes with the fifteen year old and also in the ballroom dancing with men. But when Rosalie comes in she is very keen on seducing Jonathan.

Jonathan is already stifled by his male-devouring mother. Madame Rosepettle’s life has affected Jonathan psychologically and he yearns to break loose from her. He tells Rosalie that his mother does not love him and adds:

JONATHAN. She told me she’d never let you visit me again. She said no one would ever visit me again. She told me I have seen enough.

....

JONATHAN. She — she hates me.

ROSALIE. What?

JONATHAN. She doesn’t let me do anything. She doesn’t let me listen to the radio. She took the tube out of the television set. She doesn’t let me use her phone. She makes me show her all my letters before I seal them. She doesn’t. (49)

Jonathan understands the real pursuit of his mother and her loveless nature. Jonathan yearns to liberate himself from his mother’s grip and explore the world freely on his own. Rosalie is another male-devouring female trying to possess
Jonathan. In his desperate struggle to extricate himself from the seductress, he smothers her to death. Kopit alludes to the airplane flying overhead and Jonathan standing on the porch with his telescope waving his arms at it to suggest Jonathan’s emancipation. However, Madame Rosepettle standing just behind him asking him “What is the meaning of this?” (60) implies that Jonathan’s liberation is only temporary.

The fifth chapter, ‘Summation’ endeavours to enlist the different bondages inflicted on human beings namely the physical, the sociological and psychological and the eternal human struggle to emancipate itself from its predicament. Kopit plays depict the endless struggle of humanity for emancipation. The playwright is meticulous in dramatizing the human anxiety for emancipation in a chaotic world.