

Antidrama—Metadrama—Artistic Program? Arthur Kopit's *The Hero* in Context

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In 1957, Arthur Kopit, then a student of engineering at Harvard University had his first play, the one-act drama *The Questioning of Nick*, performed at the stage of the Dunster House Drama Workshop in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The realistic play was written in the manner of Arthur Miller's early works, and focussed on the psychological conflicts faced by the dramatis personae. By the time Kopit graduated from Harvard in 1959, seven of his early plays had been performed. By then he had gradually moved away from realistic traditions. Yet although plays like *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* (1960) and *Indians* (1968) may be regarded as important contributions to the contemporary American stage, Arthur Kopit's dramatic work has not gained the critical attention it deserves. With the exception of *Indians* his plays are usually neglected. In his monumental three-volume *Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*,¹ Christopher W. E. Bigsby mentions Arthur Kopit's work only briefly, while he extensively acknowledges the plays of Sam Shepard, David Mamet, and Robert Wilson. As if Kopit's artistic potential were exhausted by his inventing the most lengthy, hilarious and absurd titles, critics often confine their interest in Kopit to listing some of these quite breathtaking titles, such as *On the Runway of Life*, *You Never Know What's Coming Off Next* or *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad: A Pseudoclassical Tragifarce in a Bastard French Tradition*.

Given the unanimous critical neglect, one might assume that Kopit's work does not deserve the effort of sustained criticism. Yet although in the scope of this paper I won't be able to prove comprehensively that the critics' disregard is based on an obvious prejudice, I will nevertheless try to show that Kopit is an important contemporary American play-

wright who deserves his audience's undivided interest. This assessment is based on a short introductory discussion of Kopit's early play *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* as well as on a more detailed analysis of his short play *The Hero*, written in 1964.

To appreciate fully the characteristics of the American drama of the 1960s and 70s one will have to account for the difficult situation which young dramatists faced at that time. When, in the late 1950s, Arthur Kopit turned to the theatre, American drama was undergoing a crisis. With Eugene O'Neill's death in 1953, with Arthur Miller's withdrawal into private life, and with Tennessee Williams' retreat from the literary arena, American theatre had lost its major representatives. Miller, Williams and O'Neill had firmly established a new dramatic tradition, a blend of realistic-expressionistic drama with a sharp focus on psychological and social conflicts.² The young dramatists, however, did not regard this type of drama as a model they wished to emulate. As they tried to open up new directions for the American theatre they even acclaimed the disappearance of the old guard as a promise of liberation from paralysing artistic conventions.

In 1959 a significant change in American drama was obvious: Edward Albee celebrated his first major success with his *Zoo Story*, The Living Theatre performed Jack Gelber's *The Connection*, Allan Kaprow had his *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* staged, and Lorraine Hansberry revived the *Black Theatre* movement with her extraordinarily successful *A Raisin in the Sun*. With the emergence, or rather eruption of these new voices, American drama seemed to enter the 1960s with the promise of a complete break away from stale and outmoded traditions.³ Yet the reorientation, radical and vital as it was, happened to be but the prologue to a lengthy and in many ways quite unsuccessful process of fighting the overwhelming heritage of the preceding generation.⁴

In the course of the 1970s all the major experimental attempts to create an utterly new theatre had exhausted their creative potential and ended in a return to realistic conventions. In spite of the fact that experimental theatre and playwriting lived on—even after the closing of such influential experimental stages as The Living Theatre and The Open Theatre—the revolutionary momentum seemed broken. Those dramatists and directors who intended to play a major part in the American theatre

during the 1970s and 80s sought to revive formerly abandoned traditions. Thus, Sam Shepard, to give just one example, turned away from his early experimental metadramatic plays (such as *Action* and *Melodrama Play*) and began to write more conventional, realistic "family plays" in the 1970s and 80s.⁵ In spite of the fact that by then the American theatre had transcended some of the economic pressures of the Broadway system by moving to off-Broadway stages, the new generation of dramatists could never completely escape from the lure of Broadway and the dictates of the audience's less revolutionary expectations. Although young playwrights had directed a considerable part of their energy to a reform of dramatic conventions, they had also acknowledged the very existence and prominence of these conventions, especially by fighting against them.

Arthur Kopit's works reflect these difficulties in many ways. From his surrealist early plays *Sing to Me Through Open Windows* (1959) and *Asylum, or, What the Gentlemen Are Up To, Not to Mention the Ladies* (1963),⁶ to the internationally acclaimed *Indians*, Kopit's work is the result of an ongoing and never completed effort to establish a voice of his own. In his essay "The Vital Matter of Environment," which was published in *Theater Arts* in 1961, Kopit frankly comments on his inability to break completely away from the conventions his predecessors had so firmly established:

One can never wholly dissociate a work of art from its creative environment any more than one can separate its style from the traditions around it. . . . Tradition has always been the basis of all innovation, and always will be.⁷

Any attempt to overcome the pressures of tradition by explicitly opposing them and writing what some dramatists and critics have called "antidrama,"⁸ makes the playwright admit, as it were *e negativo*, the persistence of the former dramatic models. Paradoxically, antidrama expresses and affirms the continuing impact of the tradition it claims to surpass, because it cannot help recreating in the first place what is to be attacked later. Moreover, by the very nature of their discourse, attempts to write antidrama are but forms of metadrama, that is, plays which explicitly deal with the problems of playwriting and the dramatist's efforts to discard out-moded traditions.⁹

Arthur Kopit's first successful play which, after being staged at Harvard University became a box-office hit at a Broadway theatre in 1962, is both a metadrama and an antidrama *par excellence*. It celebrates the spirit of rebellion and seems to take extraordinary pleasure in subverting the entire repertoire of the American drama in the 1940s and 50s. With its subtitle *A Pseudoclassical Tragifarce in a Bastard French Tradition* Kopit's play *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad* signals that it is primarily out to satirize the dramatic tradition. Although Arthur Kopit seems to follow Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams in his choice of subject (a men-hating mother dominating her emotionally crippled son), his dramatic technique is completely different.

When the curtain rises and some of the props are carried onto the stage, the audience immediately perceives Kopit's parodistic intentions. In addition to a coffin in which Mrs Rosepettle transports the corpse of her deceased husband from one holiday resort to another, the audience's attention is directed to two enormous Venus fly-traps. The latter as well as the entire atmosphere of the opening scene recall Williams' play *Suddenly Last Summer*. Moreover, the names of the characters tellingly refer the spectator to another of Williams' works, *The Rose Tattoo*. You have Mrs Rosepettle, the domineering mother, Commodore Rosabove, her passionate but bluntly rejected wooer, and Rosalie, the young woman who tries to rescue the retarded Jonathan from under his mother's domination. Yet there are also obvious similarities with respect to the dramatic action. In *The Rose Tattoo* the widow Serafina delle Rose celebrates her love for her dead husband Rosario by centering her whole life around the urn containing his ashes. Very much like Mrs Rosepettle, Serafina, in her self-destructive mourning, threatens to destroy the life of her only child, Rosa. Yet, in contrast to Williams' realistic portrayals, Kopit refrains from exploring the psychological problems of his dramatis personae altogether, presenting characters which are as flat as caricatures can possibly be. He is satisfied with delineating his characters as if they were mere quotations from pre-existing texts. By putting elements of the "pre-texts" in new and utterly inappropriate contexts he ridicules the objectives of traditional drama, not even shrinking back from devices of slapstick comedy when he can use them effectively. In the final scene in which Rosalie tries to seduce Jonathan in his mother's bedroom he makes fun of modern

dramatists and directors, especially of their habit to "over-psychologize" in their often blunt application of Freudian psychoanalysis to the characters on stage. When Rosalie and Jonathan are about to make love, the father's mummified corpse falls from the closet—where it was stored—right onto the bed.¹⁰

As *A Pseudoclassical Tragifarce in a Bastard French Tradition, Oh Dad, Poor Dad* is also meant to be a critical analysis and repudiation of the "French" influence on the American theatre of the 1950s, i.e. the influence of the Theatre of the Absurd.¹¹ Kopit's characters are trapped in situations similar to those depicted by the so-called Absurdist as typical of the human condition. The dramatis personae live in a world where meaningful action is impossible and communication leads nowhere. The plot of *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* is circular, and, at the end—as if speaking for the distressed spectator—Mrs Rosepettle can only voice the complete breakdown of meaning when she addresses Jonathan with the question: "What is the meaning of this?"

Since Arthur Kopit's *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* negates the dramatic conventions dominating American drama in the 1950s it may be called a perfect antidrama. Consequently it displays many elements of metadrama, because it constantly reflects the failure of realistic and absurd drama, and explicitly disqualifies those specific texts that used to serve as "pre-texts." One might even feel justified in interpreting the events on stage as a dramatization of the situation in which the new playwrights found themselves at the start of their career. Jonathan, who, as a consequence of his paralyzing dependence on his parent, has not even been able to find his own language but stammers most of the time, may represent the young dramatist who tries to overcome the stifling heritage of his predecessors and is still in search of his own voice. As the play ends with Jonathan submitting again to his mother's overpowering influence and his regression to a stage of speechlessness, *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* gives a rather bleak outlook on the future of American drama. With the "pre-texts" still looming so large, the contemporary dramatist is condemned to endlessly "re-present" the tradition, either by slavishly imitating it or by rebelling against it.

Arthur Kopit's *The Hero* may be regarded as an antidrama to an even greater extent than *Oh Dad, Poor Dad*. The play is a dumb show, and as

such completely dispenses with one of the foremost means of dramatic presentation, the medium of language. It negates the conventions of traditional drama in the most radical way. Again, Kopit writes his play on the backdrop of pre-existing texts. Very much like the two protagonists in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the nameless hero of Kopit's short play is a ragged tramp who seems to have lost his orientation in the world. The scenario evoked by the stage décor confronts the spectator with the perfect emblem of man's absurd plight: the hero finds himself lost in the midst of an endless desert.

To summarize the action: after entering the stage a man collapses from exhaustion, gets up again, and carefully dusts off his rags and his attaché case. Then he begins to search the ground, looks back from whence he came, searches again, and finally leaves the stage as if intent on fetching something he lost on his way. He returns carrying a huge scroll of paper. Satisfied with his success, he takes a sandwich from his pocket, but soon finds out that he cannot eat it as it is rotten and hard as a rock. Irritated by this experience, he pulls out a large, badly fragmented "MAP OF THE WORLD." Although he knows that a map on this scale will not give him any sense of his exact whereabouts, he nevertheless checks the map, and pretends to have found the section depicting the desert. When he seems to spot something in the distance he gets out a pair of opera glasses and begins to unroll the scroll of paper, arranging it like a billboard. He picks up his attaché case, takes out a paintbox, and, while scanning the distance with his opera glasses, draws a sketch of an oasis with a palm tree, a pool and all the goodies necessary for a luxurious picnic. After finishing his painting he carefully hides the paintbox behind the scroll, straightens up his appearance and rests, in a rather cheerful and content mood, in the shade of the palm tree he has just painted.

This ludicrous and seemingly meaningless action reaches its climax when a tattered woman appears on the stage. Suddenly confronted with the picture of an oasis and a real man resting under a fake palm tree, she is somewhat irritated, but pretends not to notice. After a while she studies the billboard and checks the distance, but—as the text of the play repeats several times—"she sees, of course, nothing." The man offers her his opera glasses, yet again, she cannot see anything. Finally she gives up her suspicions and sits down under the palm tree, even going so far as to

share the rotten sandwich with the man. She seems to be content with her situation. The play ends with the following stage direction:

Suddenly she touches his shoulder and he turns. He looks at her. She motions to the surrounding oasis and sighs, with pleasure. She laughs warmly. He laughs modestly. They snuggle up to each other. They stare off into the distance, smiles on their faces. Long pause.

*The orange disk of the sun sets slowly against the cyclorama. The lights fade as it does. They snuggle more, as the cold of night approaches. The vague smiles on their faces never leave. Indeed, they almost seem frozen there. Darkness.*¹²

The dramatic action in Arthur Kopit's *The Hero* is indeed quite enigmatic if not absurd, and, accordingly, critics regard it as an insignificant joke, a joke not even worth the effort of interpretation. So far, only one critic has bothered to analyze the play in some detail. Jürgen Wolter deals with Kopit's playlet as a critique of the common ideology of heroism. "After a long journey through the world," Wolter asserts,

after a severe test of his heroism by reality, the hero . . . uses a billboard to advertize the false dream of his heroism. When a woman comes along, he succeeds in making her believe in his vision. . . . For the audience, the dream of heroism, which the woman indulges in . . . turns into nightmare, because we realize that . . . life can only be endured with the help of illusion.¹³

In his search for what he calls the "serious subject" in Kopit's play Wolter comes to quite a convincing conclusion. But with regard to the context in which Kopit's early plays were written, and especially to their overall anti- and metadramatic orientation, we might as well question Wolter's interpretation. Given Arthur Kopit's earlier *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* with its poignant satire of the "Bastard French Tradition," the question arises whether *The Hero* is not as much of a metadrama as most of Kopit's earlier plays. As such it could be interpreted as a subversive attack on the preconceptions and ideologies on which most plays written in the vein of the Theatre of the Absurd are based.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the play, the situation of the homeless tramps who find themselves cast out in a life-negating desert evokes a perspective propagated by many playwrights of the absurdist tradition. The orientation which the fragmented "MAP OF THE WORLD"

seems to promise is far from comprehensive, and, as the image of the discarded segments of the map suggests, the past, i.e. the road already travelled, is absolutely incapable of defining one's present situation. Yet unlike Samuel Beckett, Arthur Kopit does not conceive his dramatis personae as being petrified when facing the meaninglessness of their actions. The structure of his play is not circular, and in contrast to Beckett's tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, Kopit's characters do not remain trapped in schematized patterns of speech and "non-action." Kopit's protagonist is a "hero" in so far as he does take action and creates an antidote to a reality which seems to be without any promise. His act of evoking the illusion of a counter-world is intended to be treated as an illusion. The means of producing it are always kept within easy reach. The capability of achieving such an illusion is so essential to man's being that the hero immediately sets out to fetch his scroll of paper when he thinks he has lost it.

In his act of creating the illusion of an alternative world the artist is certainly not restricted to a mere imitation of reality. When the woman enters the stage and is not able to find the "real" equivalent of the pictured oasis anywhere on the horizon, the audience becomes aware of the fact that the work of art produced by the artist/hero is not at all a representation of a pre-existing reality. The woman "sees, of course, nothing," because the oasis is only a projection of the artist's imagination and as such the expression of his own psychological needs. When the woman finally and even against her better judgement discards her skepticism and quite willingly submits to the illusion, she enacts what in the theory of art has been aptly described as the readers' or audiences' "willing suspension of disbelief." This willing suspension refers to an act of the intentional disregard of one's better knowledge, that is to say the knowledge that all pictures of reality presented by art are more or less well made artefacts. The phrase of the "willing suspension of disbelief," which was coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, originally only encapsulated the artist's effort of creating an imaginary reality with a "semblance of truth."¹⁴ Coleridge maintained that the artist had to manufacture his picture of reality in a way that enables the recipient to perceive the picture as if it were reality itself. Because the suspension of disbelief depends on the verisimilitude of the work of art, Coleridge

wants the artist to make the reproduction of reality as authentic as possible.

Unlike Coleridge, who approached the problem of artistic illusion from the point of view of "art production" and meant his term to refer to the artist's means of making the reader suspend his disbelief, Kopit's reference to this concept opens up a double perspective. On the one hand, Kopit focusses on the artist himself and analyses the conditions and procedures which lead to the creation of artistic illusions; on the other hand, he deals with the psychological mechanisms which enable or even force the spectator to accept the mere "As-If" as the real reality. In contrast to the widely held theory that the creation of a work of art immediately presupposes reality as a model of its imaginary reproduction, Kopit's version of the concept seems to imply that the prerequisite of artistic production is not objective but subjective reality, in other words, a specific psychological disposition. In the case of *The Hero*, the oasis the artist seems to copy by looking at some distant reality with his opera glasses is nothing but a mere hallucination. The artist does not represent reality, but the likeness of his own wishful thinking. Hoping to find an oasis he projects his wishes onto reality in the first place. His work of art, then, is merely the mirror of his emotions. The depiction of a picnic scene directly reflects his frustration at finding his sandwich inedible.

From the point of view of the recipient, a "willing suspension of disbelief" is, indeed, an act of volition. The woman scrutinizes and acknowledges the illusion as the illusion it actually is. She realizes that the oasis is a fake. And only after she has scanned the horizon and knows that there is no real oasis in sight which could satisfy her wishes, she decides to give in to the illusion. The illusion art can offer is, however, not regarded as an alternative to reality, but as a means of compensation for what cannot be obtained in real life.

With this depiction of the compensating function of art, Arthur Kopit poses the fundamental question of the possible objectives which art might fulfill in modern society. As the ending of *The Hero* reveals, the illusion created by art seems to enable man to transcend the threatening situation of his being cast into a hostile and uninhabitable world. Art's compensating potential is, however, also characterized as a means of a highly questionable escape from the necessity of finding an adequate answer

to the demands of the present situation. When darkness approaches, reality can no longer be suppressed. Although both characters try to do their best when they face the destruction of their illusion, Kopit clearly shows that art can lead to a dead end. The bright smile on the faces of the *dramatis personae* becomes vaguer and vaguer as the sun gradually disappears, and seems almost frozen in the end. In spite of the fact that a temporary retreat into the world of illusion might improve man's ability to cope with the frustrations inflicted by an adverse reality, this retreat might also lead to a complete loss of one's ability to take adequate action in order to adapt oneself to an allegedly hopeless situation.

At the end of his play, Kopit certainly does not follow an aesthetics of escapism as it had been propagated by the Broadway system. Works of art are certainly able to create a perfect illusion and may thus temporarily satisfy the psychological needs of the audience. Yet, such perfect illusions are counterproductive as they destroy the audience's capabilities of analyzing and responding to the problems of exterior reality in an appropriate way. *The Hero* dramatizes Kopit's call for an anti-illusionist artistic program, a call for a theatre which confronts the audience with the reality it would rather not see. Designed as a metadrama, *The Hero* could indeed never become a herald of an aesthetics of illusion. Its major thrust is directed at criticizing the results of an art which traps its audience in a fake world of wish-fulfillment.

Arthur Kopit remained true to the artistic program thus outlined in his early antidrama. In his later works of art from *The Day the Whores Came Out to Play Tennis* (1965) and *Indians* (1968) to *Wings* (1978) and the apocalyptic play about the unpredictable success of nuclear deterrence, *The End of the World* (1984), Kopit lived up to his programmatic claim for a theatre which confronts the audience with an unvarnished picture of reality.

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NOTES

¹(Cambridge: CUP, 1985). Critical discussions of Kopit's oeuvre are scarce. Notable exceptions are Jürgen Wolter's "Arthur Kopit: Dreams and Nightmares," *Essays on Contemporary American Drama*, ed. Hedwig Bock and Albert Wertheim (Munich: Hueber, 1981) 55-74, Carol Harley's article "Arthur Kopit" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 7: *Twentieth-Century American Dramatists* (Part II), ed. John MacNicholas (Detroit: Gale, 1981) 41-49, and Doris Auerbach's study *Sam Shepard, Arthur Kopit, and the Off Broadway Theater* (Boston: Twayne, 1982).

²Cf. esp. O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* (1946) and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956), which was staged only posthumously, Miller's *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953), and Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). For a comprehensive survey of the predominance of psychological and social realism in the American drama of the 1940s and 50s cf. Gerald M. Berkowitz, *American Drama of the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1992), esp. chapter 4, and Paul Goetsch's "Vom psychologisch-sozialkritischen zum absurden Drama: Williams, Miller, Albee," *Das amerikanische Drama*, ed. Gerhard Hoffmann (Bern: Francke, 1984) 202-39 and 309-11.

³Cf. Theodore Shank's *American Alternative Theatre* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982) and Herbert Grabes's "Das experimentelle Theater in Amerika seit den frühen 60er Jahren," *Das amerikanische Drama*, ed. Hoffmann, 240-72 and 311-12, here: 240.

⁴Edward Albee's rebellion against the tradition of the psychologically oriented realistic drama in such plays as *The Zoo Story* and *The American Dream*, did, for instance, not really succeed in reaching its objectives. Albee's attempt to rid himself of the influence of Miller and Williams by embracing the new tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd, only made him submit to other figures of authority. Moreover, with his mode of characterization and the development of the dramatic action he still moved along the old tracks of the psychological and socio-critical drama.

⁵Cf. Ron Mottram, *Inner Landscapes: The Theatre of Sam Shepard* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1984), Elena Oumano, *Sam Shepard: The Life and Work of an American Dreamer* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1986), Ulrich Adolphs, *Die Tyrannei der Bilder: Sam Shepards Dramen* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1990), Martin Tucker, *Sam Shepard* (New York: Continuum, 1992), David J. DeRose, *Sam Shepard* (New York: Twayne, 1992).

⁶*Asylum* was later performed and published under the title *Chamber Music*.

⁷*Theater Arts* (April 1961) 36.

⁸The term "antidrama" is used here as a relational term, i.e. a term which is defined by its radical opposition to and discarding of dominant theatrical conventions and not by a set of fixed features. In "Le tragédie du langage," (1958) Eugène Ionesco defined "anti-theatre" as the result of a parodistic impulse which subverts and negates existing standards: "En écrivant cette pièce [i.e. *La Cantatrice chauve*] (car cela était devenu une sorte de pièce ou une anti-pièce, c'est-à-dire une vraie parodie de pièce, une comédie de la comédie), j'étais pris d'un véritable malaise, de vertige, de nausée. . . . Je m'imaginai avoir écrit quelque chose comme la *tragédie du langage!* . . . Quand on la joua je fus presque étonné d'entendre rire les spectateurs qui prirent (et prennent toujours) cela gaiement, considérant que c'était bien une comédie, voire un canular." Ionesco, "La tragédie du langage," *Notes et contre-notes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962) 157; originally published in *Spectacles* 2 (July 1958). Cf. also ch. 3 ("Eugène

Ionesco: Theatre and Anti-Theatre") of Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), esp. 125-41.

⁹For a discussion of the term "metadrama" see esp. Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), Robert J. Nelson, *Play within Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1958), James L. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971), and Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1986).

¹⁰The fact that the seduction scene happens to take place in the mother's and not in Jonathan's bed, additionally highlights the unsolved oedipal situation. Cf. Zoltan Szilassy's interpretation in "Yankee Burlesque or Metaphysical Farce?," *Hungarian Studies in English* 11 (December 1977) 143.

¹¹The term "Theatre of the Absurd" is used here as defined by Martin Esslin in his seminal study *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Esslin bases his attempt at definition primarily on the ideological orientation of plays by Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco and others which seem to expound a view of life quite similar to that expressed, for instance, by Camus in his *Le mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l'absurde* (1942). Edward Albee and most dramatists of his generation pay homage to the so-called "French tradition." Albee himself described the Theatre of the Absurd as "an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense—which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political and social structures man has erected to 'illusion' himself have collapsed." Albee, "Which Theatre is the Absurd One?," *Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama*, ed. John Gassner (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966) 332.

¹²The text of Kopit's *The Hero* is quoted from *The Day the Whores Came Out to Play Tennis and Other Plays by Arthur Kopit* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965) 79-84, here: 84.

¹³Wolter 63.

¹⁴In ch. 14 of his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge asserts: "In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." *Biographia Literaria*, ed. John Shawcross, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907) 2: 5-6.