INTRODUCTION

*Even signs must burn.* . . .

Jean Baudrillard

*Opposition ceases its labour and difference begins its play.*

Gilles Deleuze

*La déconstruction, c’est l’Amérique.*

Jacques Derrida

‘His game is with language. And his characters are trapped in the world of their language or precisely his language. His plays are likened intertextually to everybody’s and uniquely to nobody’s. He is told to write like Albee, Beckett, and Pinter and to be influenced by Miller, Williams and O’Neill. At the same time, he is claimed to be a playwright who has an uncanny ear for, and unique treatment of, the language. He has won one Pulitzer Prize, three Obie awards, and two New York Critic Circle Awards. His name is David Allen Mamet and he is from Chicago, USA.’

The way he is introduced in the preceding paragraph is how TV talk-shows do—selling people like David Mamet to his audience. In a ‘prestigious’ political talk-show on BBC, *Hard Talk*, the ex-host, Tim Sebastian, was famous for his intensely heated-up debates, which were otherwise considered boring. Before starting, he would introduce (his successor still does) the guest the way David Mamet was introduced and then to start the interview with a fixed phrase: (say) “Mr David Mamet: Welcome to *Hard Talk*.” He would continuously interrupt his interviewees’ speech and bombard them with his questions. His interruptions and his non-stop questions like: ‘why do you’ this, ‘why do you’ that, ‘once you had mentioned’ that, ‘how do you explain’ this or that, ‘do you deny’ this or that without waiting for their answers make the guest feel uneasy and uncomfortable and naturally nervous, which consequently makes him raise his voice and become excited, or lose patience, uttering sentences like ‘let me . . . let me answer’ that, ‘I . . . I will’ and repeating with stress some of his words that, he thinks, may be lost or misunderstood among the repetitive interruptions of the host. This kind of verbal exchange, hence, combined with the cinematographic techniques such as jamb cuts and inserts of hand movements and facial expressions, augments the excitement of the programme and makes it more attractive for the
audience to follow. Tim Sebastian, by following this method, in fact, does not care what the guest is saying. He deconstructs the traditional concept of centre/margin in such a programme, whose boring centrality was what the guest says (boring, because the TV consumer, nowadays, cannot stand a programme lasting more than ten minutes). Tim’s way of anchoring marginalises the guest’s role, and the margins of the programme such as interruptions, gaps, excitements are foregrounded. The main object for him is the ‘excitability’ and approvability of the programme; a programme which makes the viewer stay tuned to the network, for the TV advertisements and the ‘reality’ the network produces as the ‘truth’ (BBC’s dictum is ‘telling the truth’). A ‘David Mamet’ is introduced and treated as an object, a ‘commodity-value,’ a ‘use-value,’ as Jean Baudrillard terms, which is used and consumed, for the benefit of ‘morality,’ and ‘social control,’ according to, of course, the ideology BBC pursues, in a society he labels ‘La société de consommation,’ or the Consumer Society. In such a society, the consumption becomes something enforced, and institutionalised in ‘a whole system of values.’

The ‘values’ and its system are what attract the Structuralists, who use “linguistics to find knowable order everywhere” (Rivkin 334), and believing in the system and its ‘universality and eternity,’ they want to know ‘how’ systems work. Post-Structuralism, on the contrary, refusing to believe in existence of such orders and structures, seeks to ‘undo’ the systems, getting the inspiration from Jacques Derrida and the later Roland Barthes (Bertens 6). While Structuralism considers ‘signs,’ including and especially the language, as a ‘transparent’ medium “outside the history” (Rivkin 334) through which the world is accessed and represented, Post-Structuralism believes that it is the sign, including language, which “constructs, rather than reflects, the world” (Bertens 6) and all of its orders, its ‘reality.’

Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive theory, having its base in Sartre’s notion of ‘foundationlessness of foundations’ (Rivkin 335), [and following the ‘pathbreaking’ books of Michel Foucault: Madness and Civilisation (1961) and The Order of Things (1966), Gilles Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962), and Jacques Lacan’s Writings (1966)], came to dismantle the ‘established’ orders, the hierarchies, taken for granted and ‘natural’ in what he called ‘logocentrism’ in the Saussurian binary opposition, and introduced the term of Deconstruction. In his famous book, Of Grammatology, Derrida deconstructed the hierarchical binary opposition of speech/writing and introduced the term ‘différence.’ He posed a question which is the
groundbase of the Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction: “what justifies the distinction between inside and outside, intelligible and physical, speech and writing?” (Rivkin 339). It is perceived, he says, that in the history and philosophy, the thought and speech are privileged over writing and other forms of signification, which are considered mere repetitions, substitutes – ‘supplementary’ for the original ones. Put simply, he argues that the original needs its ‘supplementary’ to prove its originality. In a binary opposition, the primary notion is traditionally considered to be the privileged one such as ‘day’ in day/night, ‘man’ in man/woman, ‘speech’ in speech/writing, etc.

However, the definition of the primary term is possible through the identification of its difference with the secondary one. Derrida calls the secondary in the binary opposition the ‘supplémentaire’ because it provides the difference and repetition for the primary’s understanding. It is difference and repetition that make the existence of the original possible. Therefore, without the secondary notion as an exterior to the primary notion, there would be no original concept at all. In Derrida’s work, and in that of “many literary and cultural critics who followed his ideas, there is always a sense that an oppositional is not innocent structural relation but a power relation, in which one term dominates another” (Currie 49). In Positions (1981), Derrida considers three phases in deconstruction’s approach to binary oppositions. In the first phase the hierarchy in the opposition is exposed, i.e. the superiority of one term over the other. The second phase witnesses the reversal of that hierarchy, and puts the second term in the superior place, and finally, the opposition is ‘reinscribed;’ it means that the difference between the two terms is disrupted or reconfigured. Hence, back to Derrida’s favourite binary opposition, speech and its truth need the signification process of writing (substitution, differentiation and repetition) to be perceived. Without the signs, there is no truth. In fact, what Derrida implies by his Deconstruction, and Gilles Deleuze elaborates in his Difference and Repetition (1986), is that all are signs and there is nothing outside the language; Derrida says “il n’y a pas de hors texte” (there is nothing outside to the text). The universe is made of words.

In Native American mythology, there is a story of the arrowmaker belonging to the tribe of Kiowa. It is mentioned and elaborated by N. Scott Momaday, whose father used to tell him when he was a small child, in his “The Native Voice” in
Colombia Literary History of the United States. It is quoted here as it is found crucial for the discussion concerning the language:

If an arrow is well made, it will have tooth marks upon it. That is how you know. The Kiowas made fine arrows and straightened them in their teeth. Then they drew them to the bow to see that they were straight. Once there was a man and his wife. There were alone at night in their tipi. By the light of a fire the man was making arrows. After a while he caught sight of something. There was a small opening in the tipi where two hides had been sewn together. Someone was there on the outside, looking in. The man went on with his work, but he said to his wife: “Someone is standing outside. Do not be afraid. Let us talk easily, as of ordinary things.” He took up an arrow and straightened it in his teeth; then, as it was right from him to do, he drew it to the bow and took aim, first in this direction and then in that. And all the while he was talking, as if to his wife. But this is how he spoke: “I know that you are there on the outside, for I can feel your eyes upon me. If you are a Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name.” But there was no answer, and the man went on in the same way, pointing the arrow all around. At last his aim fell upon the place where his enemy stood, and he let go of the string. The arrow went straight to the enemy’s heart.

(Momaday 11-12)

This simple ‘story of arrowmaker’ “is about language” (Momaday 12). It shows how the language becomes the only medium for the identification of the man. The arrowmaker shapes his identity, and his enemy’s as well, through the language. He and his wife exist as they use their language to exist. They do not have any name and all are presented by the storyteller through language. He tells about himself, his wife, his enemy, and the risk involved in the language. The arrowmaker “is pre-eminently the man made of words. He has a consummate being in language. It is the world of his origin” (13). It is all he has and is.

Accordingly, Deleuze, arguing over the Platonist Ideals (whose surfaces are present in this world and the original ones are in the other world with God), deconstructs them and privileges the surfaces (what Plato called ‘simulacra’). He concludes that “there are no universal ideas, only appearances, but even these can no longer be called appearances, since they do not make anything appear” (Rivkin 342).

This is what Jean Baudrillard calls hyperreality in a different context. The reality is only surface and sign; it is constructed by the language. Indeed, Post-Modernists are those Post-Structuralists in the terminology of Anglophone academy (Rivkin 352), who used the deconstruction to dispute Modernism. However, it is not
that simple to define postmodernism, whose definition is as diverse as are the words used for the notion: Post-Modernism, postmodernism, postmodern, postmodernity, etc; and perhaps that is what it is as it “has been a particularly unstable concept” (Bertens 12). It has manifested “itself in many fields of cultural endeavour – architecture, literature, photography, film, painting, video, dance, music, and elsewhere” (Hutcheon 1). And its development was on different fronts. As its name indicates, some say postmodernism is the extension of Modernism, while others say that it is anti-Modernism. And some also think that it is a return to the traditional presentation. “Postmodernism,” says Hans Bertens in his *The Idea of the Postmodern*, “then is several things at once” (Bertens 3). On the one hand, it is a self-reflexive postmodernism, which is anti-representational and anti-narrative and on the other, it returns to narrative and representation and believes that the only thing we have is narration. It is the juxtaposition of both the world of art and ‘real-life,’ parody and history. Hence, the postmodernist practise is committed to ‘doubleness,’ or ‘duplicity.’ It means that postmodernism concomitantly uses and overturns the same conventions, either traditional or modern. We are, thus, back to the initial issue between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.

Postmodernism uses the approach of Deconstruction to do its presentation and analysis. Jean-François Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* examining the relationship between power and knowledge; Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* arguing that of power and gender; Jean Baudrillard’s *The Consumer society* undoing that of power and capitalistic consumption; Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze’s *The Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* criticising the Freudian psychoanalysis; and Roland Barthes’ later works, particularly, *Mythologies* and *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, studying the notion of ‘doxa,’ marked the beginning of the political postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon insists that “postmodern art cannot but be political [...] to ‘de-doxify’ our cultural representations and their undeniable political import” (Hutcheon 3). What she means by ‘de-doxification’ is perceived as the same approach we observe in Derrida’s Deconstruction of hierarchical binary oppositions. ‘Doxa’ is a term which Roland Barthes borrows from Aristotle’s *endoxa* and associating it with myth-making, it means the notions of “Common Sense, Right Reason, the Norm, General Opinion” (Barthes 165) “with the invasive power of mass discourse in modernity – with opinion in the statistical meaning of the term” (Pierrot 428). Therefore, ‘de-doxification brings the
inseparability of postmodernism and post-structuralism into the focus, as well as unravelling the fact that the relationship between modernism and postmodernism is like that of structuralism and post-structuralism.

Lawrence E. Cahoone, the editor of *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, in his introduction to the collection asserts that the term ‘modernism’ can refer either to the modern period considering its social, philosophical and cultural implications or to a movement in the arts during the period 1850 to 1950. Modernism, either in the social context or in the realm of literature and art, is largely and generally characterised by distinguishing qualities such as ‘aestheticism, capitalism, secular culture, liberal democracy, individualism, humanism, and rationalism.’ In the former domain, it is criticised by some as “a movement of ethnic and class domination, European imperialism, anthropocentrism, the destruction of nature, the dissolution of community and tradition, the rise of alienation, the death of individuality in bureaucracy” (Cahoone 12). In the latter, the artists tried various forms: from the realism to impressionism to abstract expressionism to the abandonment of objective narrative while considering inseparability of “notions of unity and universality or what Lyotard dubbed ‘metanarratives’” from modernity (Hutcheon 24). That is how Henry James, in his “The Art of Fiction” (1884) criticising the novels of Victorian age and particularly of Anthony Trollope (who could have been considered postmodern if he had lived in late twentieth century), says:

In a digression, a parenthesis or an aside, he concedes to the readers that he and this trusting friend are only ‘making believe.’ He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime. (James 323)

He insists that the novelist, while keeping the unity, must take seriously his role as a ‘truth teller,’ a truth which is, according to postmodernists, textual and constructed. Borrowing the arguments of post-structuralism on language and signs, postmodernists like Lacan, Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard maintain that ‘truth,’ ‘reality,’ ideology and Knowledge are all constructed by the language and texts. They assume “a reality of textuality and signs, of representation that do not represent” (Bretens 7) and that the ideology, borrowing Louis Althusser’s ideas, is “a system of representation and as a necessary and unavoidable part of every social totality” (Hutcheon 6). Postmodernism claims all orders are strategies of power and social control,
empowered by an astounding ability that ‘western capitalist culture’ owns to naturalise (or ‘doxify’) signs and images (Hutcheon, 7). It was time, they argued, to burn down the signs and with the signs, all the orders of meaning and/or reality that signs help maintain.

In brief, Lawrence Cahoone summarises some major distinguished themes postmodernism deals with: presence, origin, unity, transcendence, and constitutive otherness. Concerning presence, postmodernism denies that anything is “immediately present’ independent of signs, language, interpretation, disagreement, etc” (Cahoone 14), and we only encounter real referents through texts, representations, and mediation. Consequently, there won’t be any origin for ‘anything.’ Postmodernism considers the notion of the ‘origin’ the base for authority and hierarchy and therefore, as Roland Barthes endorses ‘the death of the author,’ it rejects the origin, source, or any deeper reality behind phenomena and as Gilles Deleuze in Difference and Repetition states, there are only surfaces and depthless appearances that exist. The concept of unity for postmodernism conveys the totalised single ‘truth’ in the text. Criticising the concept, the postmodernists believe that “no analysis of anything can be complete or final” (Cahoone 15) and therefore there is more than one single ‘truth.’ So are the other transcendental ‘norms’ treated by postmodernists, such as goodness, beauty, rationality. Postmodernism claims that the norms or ideas are not something eternal, standing out of history. On the contrary, the idea was created at a certain time and place by the processes of thought, writing, negotiation and power to serve certain interests and is dependent on a certain intellectual and social context. The theme of constitutive otherness is, in fact, concerned with what Derrida does with the binary opposition, in which one entity is privileged over the ‘other’ by representing properties which the former has and the latter lacks and vice-versa. Deconstructive postmodernism seeks the demolition of such privileging and its naturalisation.

However, as Derrida states there is no alternative for ‘logocentrism’ (Cahoone 18), deconstruction and burning down the signs again falls in paradoxical and circuitous loop. It creates another hierarchy and order in which ‘margin’ becomes the ‘centre’ and privileged. Nonetheless, as Hutcheon mentions, it is this paradox that makes them postmodern. A postmodern text, in order to have representation, being aware ‘of difference and contradiction, of being inside and outside,’ of its inevitability to use the conventional ‘signs’ and of also the readers’ consciousness, uses parody as its main form of representation, because “in deconstructive critique you have to signal
A postmodern text uses, self-consciously, the techniques of modernist art and literary trends such as self-referentiality, irony, ambiguity, and parody, as well as traditional narrative such as realism and even their texts as intertextual method, and then contests the ideologies of the same trends in order to suggest “that everything always was ‘cultural,’ [. . .] that is, always mediated by representations” (Hutcheon 34). What postmodernism does is merely to make overt the processes of narrative representation. This is what Linda Hutcheon calls “postmodern de-naturalising – the simultaneous inscribing and subverting of the conventions of narrative” (Hutcheon 49), which has constructed our history, our past, our identity, and our society, because there are only and only discourses and texts through which the past, its history and all documents are accessible. This is also what Jean Baudrillard conveys (probably inadvertently, as he is criticised for his nostalgia about the period he assumes there was ‘reality’ and ‘natural,’ for there is only one medium to access that period: texts.) when he speaks about ‘the orders of simulacra’ in his “Symbolic Exchange and Death” (1976). He puts forward three orders: the counterfeit, production, and simulation:

The first-order simulacrum operates on the natural law of value, the second-order simulacrum on the market value, and the third-order simulacrum on the structural value. (Baudrillard 492)

The first one belongs to “the period from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution” (Bertens 150). The society was organised by a relationship to a system of ‘fixed’ signs which were limited in numbers and supposedly ‘divine.’ Baudrillard is criticised for metaphysical idealism of his first order, in which he assumes the value to be ‘natural.’ The second order of simulacra appears with the industrial revolution. The simulacra now become infinitely reproducible through industrial mass production. Factories produce the exact replicas of objects, and market forces govern reproduction and become the dominant principle. However, according to Baudrillard, the current era is that of third order, the order of simulation; the era of models which are provided and “controlled by the code” (Baudrillard, SED 500) created by the mass media. In the universe of the mass media like Hollywood, pop art, TV, cyberblitz, signs and images create their own world, which does not correspond with the ‘real’ world, and in which “[t]he cool universe of digitality absorbs the universe of metaphor and metonymy. The simulation principle dominates the reality principle” (Baudrillard 500). There is a programme in French Canal 2, “Vos Imitations,” in which professional imitators
imitate the people from the French and American presidents to Madonna and Michael Jackson so 'really' that if you do not see them you will think that, say, Jacques Chirac is speaking. More than that, they all become one 'real' character and are addressed and asked, as the real one, how exactly the others imitate him, say, Monsieur Chirac. In this exchange, the audience loses the concept of 'reality' and confuses who imitates whom. This is what Baudrillard means. Their world has produced an order of representation that is not unreal, but has replaced 'reality' and is more than 'real,' more real than real – the hyperreal. It is the world of 'hyperreality,' where "the destruction of meaning and of all relation to reality" (Hutcheon, 33) happens. As a result, whatever critique Baudrillard's order has offered is affirmed by the 'cultural'-ness of everything in the world as Linda Hutcheon brings more proof from Fredric Jameson’s work, quoting him in her book:

In the form of the logic of the image or the spectacle of the simulacrum, everything has become 'cultural' in some sense. A whole new house of mirrors of visual replication and of textual reproduction has replaced the older stable reality of reference and of the non-cultural 'real.'(qtd. in Hutcheon: 34)

Therefore, the postmodern de-naturalisation is using the conventions of Baudrillardian hyperreal world not to degenerate into the same world but to question it, to problematise the very same conventions. When the postmodern text uses the narrative representation, by its paradoxical 'reflexivity and historicity,' by de-naturalisation, that is, its concurrent exploitation of and critical comment on the conventions “through irony and parody” (Hutcheon 58), the representation is self-consciously represented as merely a 'representation' (i.e. as one way of interpreting and creating the 'reality') and not as a dominant force which "effaces the referent" (Hutcheon 34) and represents itself as the 'reality.' Postmodern use and abuse of convention:

works to 'de-doxify' any sense of the seamlessness of the join between
the natural and the cultural, the world and the text, thereby making us
aware of the irreducible ideological nature of every representation – of
past and present.(Hutcheon 53)

Hence, when Baudrillard announces the ‘death of the real’ in the world of hyperreality, where there is no reality behind this generalised, neutralised and neutered flow of codes, simulations and simulacra, he can be understood to mean that all the media and, in fact, myth-makers in the western society have created and
represented a world in which the ‘culture’ has become the ‘nature’- it has been naturalised to the extant that we believe it to be ‘real.’ He brings the example of America and Disneyland. Talking about the ‘real’ reproduction of all cinematic fantasies in Disneyland, which become a part of creation of simulacrum, in his Simulations (1983), he concludes that the abolition of any qualitative distinction between Disneyland and the real world serves to turn America itself into Disneyland: Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. (Baudrillard 25)

Indeed, the postmodern de-naturalising or ‘demythologising’ “at once inscribes and subverts the conventions and ideologies of the dominant cultural and social forces of the twentieth-century western world [in order to ask] its readers to question the processes by which we represent our selves and our world to ourselves and to become aware of the means by which we make sense of, and construct order out of, experience in our particular culture” (Hutcheon 11& 53-4).

This is what David Mamet does in his dramaturgy with popular American myths. He uses the myths which have been naturalised by the dominant cultural and social forces of America and demythologises them. If we accept Roland Barthes’ definition of the myth, which he considers as “a type of speech” (Barthes, MT 1119), then it would come to be considered as a privileged concept in Derrida’s ‘logocentrism,’ which should be deconstructed. Myth would be, as Claude Levi-Strauss claims, language or at least a part of language, whose “substance lies [. . .] in the story which it tells” (Levi-Strauss 104), and which, according to poststructuralists, creates the reality, and effacing the referent, tries to represent the only truth. This is what modernists such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Yeats are believed to have done, claiming the replacement of narrative method with myth method in their “pursuit of a more complex sense of reality” (Faulkner 17). T. S. Eliot defended the modernist new methods of organisation, particularly through juxtaposition and irony in his essay, “Ulysses, Order and Myth,” in which he answered the critiques especially on Ulysses:

Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step towards making the modern world possible for art. (Eliot, qtd in Faulkner 17)

Therefore, the myth is perceived as a mode like any other mode of signification, and more powerful, more efficacious, to “articulate our experience of ourselves in our
social and natural environment” (Austin 5). In fact, when Roland Barthes writes about myth in his Mythologies, he considers it the third order of signification following the production of two orders of ‘semiological system,’ denotation and connotation, the elaboration of second order which enables myth, being ‘distortion’ and ‘inflexion,’ to “naturalise an intentional concept” (Barthes 1132) to transform history into nature and then to be consumed by the ‘myth-reader.’ And how history is first transformed into nature and then consumed by the ‘myth-reader’ is something we can easily demonstrate by taking recourse to the some of the emergent patterns of American history, literature and culture.

In the American context, it might appear somewhat anachronistic to talk of the popular myths, especially because the discovery of this land was, quite specifically, implicated in a well-defined historical process. In a manner of speaking, America has not been through the mythical stage in its evolution and development, either. However, once we realize that the “America was not so much discovered as invented” (Crasnow & Haffenden, 31), the need to excavate the mythical substructures embedded within the larger historical processes becomes manifest. For this reason, it becomes important to map out, even interrogate and deconstruct, the diverse mythical patterns that have, from time to time, naturalized the diversity of the American history and culture into an oppressive linearity, unity and coherence. Much before we start interrogating or critiquing this process of naturalization, it would be instructive to offer an overview of some of the popular American myths that have endured through history.

Though the spatial boundaries of America were demarcated long ago, the myth of the Frontier, in its residual form, continues to survive either in the grandiloquent dreams of its inhabitants or the expansionist, hegemonic designs of its successive governments. The myth of the Frontier dates back to those times when the Puritans had just about started trickling into the New Land. The existence of an open, free and welcoming land, with its constantly receding boundaries and consequent advance of the American settlements westward, led to the emergence of the American myth of the Free and Open Frontier. According to F. J. Turner the author of The Frontier in American History, ‘free land’ is the most significant feature of the myth of Frontier in America, whose configuration is the western cowboy ‘with his restless and rugged, dogged individualism.’ Among others, it is in the works of the famous American novelist Horatio Alger that we find the embodiment of this Frontier Man.
Much before its formal discovery by Columbus in 1492, America had existed in the popular European imagination as an unknown world located at ‘the end of the east,’ as a ‘terrestrial paradise’ or El Dorado. It was this medieval notion that later transformed itself into the Renaissance myth of Utopia, embodied in and popularised by Thomas More’s *Utopia*, first printed in 1516. It is believed that all groups of English pioneers from Maine to Georgia were influenced by More’s ideas. This is how the New Land became a vehicle for the projective imagination. If America is today seen as a land of endless opportunities and freedom from the social, political and religious institutions, it is thanks to this notion of ‘imaginary America’ that has fired the imagination and fuelled the dreams of millions of immigrants over the centuries. Despite the real, crippling horrors of migration and the contaminations of race or slavery faced by the large chunks of its population, the myth of Utopia has survived in the literary imagination of its writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Hart Crane et al. The movement of ‘Transcendentalism’ that surfaced in the 19th century America was simply one of the ideological manifestations of this particular mythopoeic pattern.

Apart from legitimating the ideals of rigorous work ethics and hard-core professionalism, the early Puritan settlers in America religiously nurtured and sustained the bourgeois ideal of the Great American Family, too. Owing to the predominance of agrarian modes of production, the concept of the Great American Family certainly had a much longer and enduring presence in the South than in other parts of the United States. However, once this structure of close-knit, patriarchal family filiations had begun to fall apart under the heavy assault of industrialized and technological advancement, it turned into a desirable collective myth and a worthy personal dream, as is reflected in the works of William Dean Howells, Kate Chopin et al. In its archival form, it continued to have its ubiquitous presence in the twentieth century American literature, primarily as an ‘inverted mythos’ of the overarching American Dream. In *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller explores how the myth of the Great American Family collapses under the weight of the American dream. In his plays *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie*, while probing the slow dissolution of this myth, Williams suggests that the American Family must continually re-invent itself as it is perpetually under an assault. Among others, John Irving, Anne Tyler and Alice Walker have also studied images and metaphors...
associated with the idealized family, replete with the attendant assumptions and expectations they connote.

For a long time, during the early history of America, the Wild West of the new continent was projected as ‘the land of opportunity, wealth and success.’ It was supposed to open up new avenues of material success for all those who were hard working, adventurous, ambitious, and more specifically, perfectionist. This ideal of success was supported as much by the Puritan ethics as it was by such success stories as *From Log Cabin to White House*, Abraham Lincoln’s ‘rags-to-riches’ story. It is only in the post-industrialized, modernist phase that the ideal of the American Dream began to turn into a virtual nightmare, thus de-naturalizing the myth supporting it. It’s another matter that the American popular culture continued to legitimate and critique this myth through works as varied as Irvin Wyllie’s *The Self-Made Man in America*, Richard Weiss’ *The American Myth of Success from Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*, David Madden’s *American Dreams, American Nightmares* and Richard Huber’s *The American Idea of Success*.

Right from the 18th and 19th centuries, the European immigrants to the America had the nurtured the dream of achieving both freedom and democracy as the principle of self-rule and self-determination. It was only after a long, political and historical struggle that the American society was able to purge itself of the contaminations of slavery and racism. Principally opposed to the inflictions of the theocratic or monarchical models, which they had already suffered in the Old World, the early settlers sought to establish a more equitable, democratic social and political culture in the New Land. While its long-drawn out historical struggle has undoubtedly helped America gain recognition as a vibrant, responsive democracy and civil society, the freedom of the individual is still a Utopian dream. Some of the trenchant critics of the American system such as Eric Fromm, Noam Chomsky and Edward Said do make us aware of the conflicting nature of its claims about individual freedom, the tradition of political dissent and respect for territorial sovereignty of other nation-states. The growing military interventions of the American establishment in the Middle East or South West Asia, especially in the recent years, have left all its claims as a defender of individual freedom, democracy and equality in shreds.

This clearly establishes how the American popular myths essentially came into existence and also endured through history as “many ancient myths are still believed and some new ones are being made” (Bain 61). However, the case about America is
that it does not possess the ancient myths. Unlike the ancient myths, in which there are divine or “semi-divine beings [. . .] whose source of power is something beyond the human” (Sutton 236), since the time of discovery of the continent when the puritans considered America as the New World promised in the Bible, which justified the expansion toward the west and led to the ‘Frontier Myth’ (Dorsey 63) and the myths following from American Myth of Success to Hollywood-promoted myths, the modern popular myths, especially the American ones have presented man “the role of protagonist,” thanks to the development of science and technology. For, as Claude Levi-Strauss argued, “a dilemma or contradiction stands at the heart of every living myth [and in fact] [t]he impulse to construct the myth arises from the desire to resolve the dilemma” (Levi-Strauss quoted in Cook 90), myths become more and more part of everyday life, and mediating reality, ‘explain’ history and culture as a ‘natural’ process.

‘Demythologising’ is considered to be a hermeneutical procedure that inquires into the nature of reality inscribed in the mythological statements and texts. The process of demythologising is, in fact, employed to criticise this naturalisation of the myths as one medium of representation – the representation of ‘authentic’ reality. Its aim is to point paradoxically both the limits and the powers of the mythical representation. Myths and the mythic patterns are totalising grand narratives, which universalise their interpretation of truth, reality or ideology as the dominant. Demythologisation both inscribes and challenges the totalising impulse of myths to make us aware that it is a part of ideological nature of the myths, like other means of representation, to impose their own principles and conventions as the only existing reality. Postmodern literary texts by practising demythologisation exploit and yet simultaneously call into question notions of totalisation and universality that are part of challenged myths as grand narratives.

Hence, the postmodern parodic strategies are used by the process of demythologising to deconstruct the myths as the historical and cultural presentations. It first creatively contextualises the myths and then deconstructively subverts them. Demythologising helps us realise that perhaps we need to stop trying to find myths as totalising grand narratives, which dissolve difference and contradiction into human truth or reality. We cannot, of course, avoid myths and mythology as a mode of representation. However, the postmodern artist demythologises the myths and asks the readers to question self-consciously the process of mythologising, by which our
world and its reality are represented and to realise how myths legitimise and privilege certain conventions, standards and principles as the ultimate reality and truth.

The current study examines how David Mamet, by demythologising the popular American Myths, which Bigsby believes exist in Mamet’s world but “hollowed out” (Bigsby 288), has tried to prove that those myths are part of the ideological process of naturalisation that has effaced the ‘reality’ and created a ‘hyperreality’ of the American Society. One of the characters of David Mamet’s *The Water Engine*, ‘Speaker,’ says: “What happened to this nation? Or did it ever exist? Did it exist with its freedoms and slogan [. . .] Where is America? I say it does not exist. And I say it never existed. It was all but a myth. A great dream of avarice . . . (WE 64). His America is a myth in which the individuals live mythically. Nothing is included in their lives but the myth. Pointing directly to one of the most important American Myths, American Dream, he explains that this capitalistic dream of wealth has led to a dead end: we are finally reaching a point where there is nothing left to exploit.... The dream has nowhere to go so it has to start turning in on itself. (Savran 133)

All of Mamet’s plays, to varying degrees, explore this process of self-destruction as a result of mythologisation in a society with the extraordinary hypocrisies; a society which itself has turned into a myth. His work unMASKS and debunks the popular American myths that dominant cultural and social forces have created to justify their hegemony. The ethics of business, sexuality, violence, and human relationship particularly in American social and cultural context are the main concerns of his oeuvre and he has been successful in communicating his concerns through his language.

David Mamet is, at present, considered American theatre’s foremost playwright, who, at the age of fifty-eight, is very prolific and has written nearly fifty plays as well as many screenplays, poems, three novels and some collected essays alongside directing several films of his own plays and screenplays during his thirty-five-year-old career.

Born at Chicago, on November 30, 1947, Mamet studied literature and theatre at Goddard College in Vermont and acting at the neighbourhood Playhouse. His first play, *Camel*, was the outcome of his graduate research and written in 1969. Since then, he has done different jobs, relevant or irrelevant to his study, from acting and teaching theatre to working on a lake boat and in a real estate agency. In 1971,
teaching in Goddard College, he founded a small theatre company with his students called the St. Nicholas Company and put on stage some plays of O'Neill as well as his own. After returning to Chicago, he produced some of his plays including *The Duck Variations*. His first success came with *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* in 1974, for which he won the Best New Chicago Award and his first Obie Award. Since then, all his plays have been under constant critical and popular scrutiny. In the era of Intertextuality, his plays have been likened to a vast array of writers, which he never denied. He openly admitted how his studying and teaching of Konstantin Stanislavski has influenced the way he treats the language of the characters and his writing style. After he won his first Jefferson Award for *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, he admitted to Ross Wetzsteon, ‘a highly respected drama critic for the Village Voice,’ in an interview:

>M]y main emphasis is on the rhythm of language – the way action and rhythm are identical. Our rhythm describe – no, our rhythm *prescribe* our actions. I became fascinated – I still am – by the way, the way the language we use, its rhythm, actually determines the way we behave, more than the other way around. Everything I am as a playwright I feel I owe to Stanislavski. (Wetzsteon 11)

Furthermore, his early plays have been influenced by his modernist and early postmodernist predecessors like O'Neill, Pinter, Albee, and Beckett; the plays like *The Duck Variations* (1972), *The Woods* (1977), *A Life in Theatre* (1977), *Lakeboat* (1970), and *Reunion* (1976). His treatment of language as poetry is like Albee’s; he orchestrates human voice as O’Neill did and his *Lakeboat* is associated with the latter’s sea plays (Biggsy 252); he has the lessons of ‘redefining dramatic action’ and his dialogues from Pinter and Beckett (Savran 135).

He had learned his lessons very well and his success continued as he wrote, among other short and long plays and screenplays, *American Buffalo* in 1975, which brought him another Obie Award, second Jefferson Award and new York Drama Critics Circle Award; *The Water Engine: An American Fable* (1977); *Dark Pony* (1977); *Prairie du Chien* (1978); *Edmond* (1982), which won Mamet his third Obie Award despite the disparaging critique in its first production at home. He scaled new heights of achievement when he wrote and produced *Glengarry Glen Ross* in 1983, which claimed the Pulitzer Prize for Drama of the year. It was also different from other plays of Mamet in the sense that its premiere was in England, not USA and was
directed by Harold Pinter, whose advice Mamet had asked about the play. The following years of his career have been fecund as well but with a very distinctive difference – women are taking greater roles in his plays. The Spanish Prisoner (1985); The Shawl (1985); Speed-the-Plow (1987), has Madonna in the role of Karen and becomes a Broadway hit; Oleanna (1992) is the most controversial and critically-discussed play of David Mamet; Cryptogram (1995); and Boston Marriage (1999) with all female cast is an answer to the long-standing critiques that Mamet could not write female characters; all have at least a woman as a leading character. He was very active on the screen as well. He started writing screenplays for the renowned Hollywood films like Sidney Lumet’s The Verdict (1982), bringing him an Oscar Nomination; Brian De Palma’s The Untouchables (1987), an Al Capone film; Barry Levinson’s Wag the Dog (1997), satirising the connection between business and Washington; and John Frankenheimer’s Ronin (1998) as well as directing his own screenplays or films based on his own plays such as Lakeboat (2001), American Buffalo (1996), Glengarry Glen Ross (1992), Oleanna (1994) and Edmond (2005) to name a few.

David Mamet and his corpus cannot be categorised in a single literary group. Besides, we also witness changes over the years in terms of the way he writes. He has been labelled realist, naturalist, self-reflexive modernist, symbolist, and even allegorist. His plays can attract and fascinate the audience as realist pieces as we do not always need to interpret their subtexts. At the same time, they could be read allegorically and symbolically with all language devices provided – irony, parody, ambiguity and allusion. In fact he is all of them and none of them and that is why he is, indeed, a postmodern writer. He uses all those schools and styles and simultaneously subverts them. Admitting that he has been inspired by Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett, Antoine Chekhov, Eugene O’Neill, Clifford Odets, Ernest Hemingway, Frank Norris, Saul Bellow, Theodore Dreiser, and many others (Mamet, WIR 71), he “takes an amalgam of all styles […] and makes them unmistakably his own” (Dean 50). Mamet’s theatre is an “illusively realistic world, full of lies,” which is eventually “undone in an even ‘more real’ scene of social debunking, physical constraint and/or theatrical undercutting” (Quinn 241). He is doing this self-consciously to let the audience know that they are all constructed either by language or by other arbitrary sings in the hands of cultural, political and social dominant forces. The chaos in his self-reflexive language often leads us to understand the chaos
apparent throughout our society (Demastes 70) and that is why he “combines symbolism and surface naturalism” (Dean 27). He believes that truth in art is necessarily linked to “empirically ascertained reality, but it is not controlled by that reality (Demastes 70). And neither is it strictly controlled by “naturalist means of perceiving that reality” (70). That can explain his interest in the third level of Roland Barthesian order of signification: Myths. Mamet realizes the strong effect that myths, hyperreally, have on all in the American society. In his collection of essays, Some Freaks, he discusses some of these myths, which are so widespread that the entire American nation hides itself behind them. In one of his essays under, “Corruption,” Mamet comments on Iran-Contra scandal and President Reagan’s involvement, “President Reagan said: The record seemed to say that I traded arms for hostages, but in my heart I did not” (Mamet 92). Mamet interprets that Reagan, thus, positions himself above the rest of society, by allowing his heart’s desire to rule a nation. He has put his faith in common myths about absolutism of power, and has fallen victim to dangerous corruption. Mamet considers this “the ultimate corruption, the megalomania brought about by power” (Mamet 92-93) and then adds:

Those of us who held authority know how great the temptation is to supersede our limits, to act ‘in the best interests of those under us,’ to, in effect, betray them for their own good. (Mamet 94)

Now, acknowledged as one of the leading playwrights of the English-speaking world, David Mamet’s career is regularly and carefully inspected and analysed by cultural critics. He has a society in his name, the David Mamet Society and an annual journal called the David Mamet Review both co-founded by Leslie Kane, a professor of English, who has written or edited four books on David Mamet. In her Weasels and Wisemen: Ethics and Ethnicity in the Work of David Mamet, she has investigated the moral, religious (Jewish precisely) and cultural principles, which have constructed the ‘aesthetic’ viewpoint of the playwright and are reflected in his dramaturgy, and “are remarkably consistent and revelatory” (Kane 1) despite the diversity in his work. She regards his plays as ‘a strict lesson in ethics,’ in which moral vision and Mamet’s yearning for telling the truth have ‘inextricable link’ (316). She finds his language full of complex ironies, parody, and linguistic reticence with poetic pattern of iambic pentameter. She believes that Mamet is very sensitive to language and uses all its potentiality peculiarly – ‘repetitions, rhetorical questions, repetitive queries, rising
interrogative rhythm, elisions, inverted syntax, monosyllabic words and obscenity’ - 
to create the world of his plays. At the same time, she observes that Mamet delineates 
his characters involved in “fictionalising, novelising, mythicising, and embellishing 
their lives in vintage Mamet stories” (231). His plays, according to Kane, reflects how 
precise his social observation is to portray betrayal, loss and the capacity to survive, 
how imaginative and inventive his theatrical world is, and how powerfully he has 
used metaphor and its dramatic and cinematic force. Mamet’s work, in her view, 
offers irresistible logic for the power game in the relationship of even the 
marginalised figures of the society – “disreputable cons, teachers, salesmen, 
hucksters, tricksters – who tenaciously survive solely on their wit” (3).

The society of David Mamet’s plays, Ruby Cohn believes, “functions through 
words” (Cohn 46). In his New American Dramatists 1960-1980, Ruby Cohn asserts 
that Mamet’s dialogues are the most economical and strenuous since Edward Albee 
and his characters are ‘loveable little people’ who speak more dexterously than any 
other writers’ characters and divulge no profundity. Nonetheless, she criticises David 
Mamet of having ‘fine’ mind, “virtually bare of ideas” (46). So does Esther Harriott 
who also believes that he is a playwright whose main concern is the language as 
language, which gives life to the characters of his theatre, and whose vulgarity she 
considers as the playwright’s ‘signature.’ Her book, American Voices: Five 
Contemporary Playwrights in Essays and Interviews examines Mamet’s plays and 
concludes like other critics that his plays reflect the desperation of the characters’ 
lives, a part of which “comes from the state of their language” and its fragmented 
structure (Harriott 76). However, she does not appreciate all of David Mamet’s plays, 
in some of which she finds ‘loosely connected scenes,’ colourless, extremely boredom 
and banal characters, and ‘primitive’ stories, and complains that Mamet does not let 
us know what he feels and what the audience should feel about his characters. 
Nevertheless, she might have misunderstood the plays one more time as she simply 
confesses that she once felt like watching “the emperor’s new clothes” when she 
could not see what the other critics saw in Mamet’s A Life in the Theatre for the first 
time (61). Sharing her idea about the playwright’s language in his book, In Their Own 
Words: Contemporary American Playwrights, David Savran finds the language a very 
important aspect of his plays and claims that what the characters do and what they say 
creates a tension in the social construct of his plays and it is “a result of the failure of 
the American Dream” (Savran 134). According to him, in his plays, Mamet focuses
on three aspects of ‘estrangement’ – psychological, social and technical. By that, he means that the characters are alienated from themselves and their society, with which they cannot communicate; at the same time their alienated language is a technical device for the sake of his dramatic creation.

Dennis Carroll’s David Mamet studies the plays of the playwright and, finding them political, elaborates how ‘societal malaise’ has been posited in the plays that cannot be easily mitigated (Carroll 19). Like Leslie Kane, she also thinks that David Mamet is a writer of morals and is concerned about how apathetic society has become – a society in which the individuals like his characters have put on a mask of language. His characters, she reckons, are hiding themselves behind their language to manipulate others. Mamet’s treatment of the characters’ dialogue is both very ‘demotic and naturalistic,’ and ‘stylised.’ She also believes in his sensitivity to language and his minimalism, and elaborates that the desire of the characters for the communication is not ‘manifested’ in the words they use but in ‘the silences, pauses, gaps and nuances’ (27). Concerning the minimalist structure as well as ‘strongly allegorical overtones’ of his plays, she regards fairytale and its narrative, and ‘archetypal mythic patterns’ as vital inspiration for David Mamet. As an instance, she mentions that the enlightening journey of a hero as an archetype in classic texts has been the inspiration for the structure of most of his plays and even that of stories fabricated by the characters within the plays (29). She concludes that the plot is not as important for Mamet as the language and its rhythm to create the world of the plays and the relationships, and if it exists, it is ironically ‘the old-fashioned linear plot.’

That is what Christopher Bigsby also remarks. In the book, with the same title as that of Ms Carroll’s, he insists that even the observance of the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action in most of his plays is often ironic. Reflecting on the playwright’s own ideas, Bigsby regards that “rhythm and action are the same [and] words are reduced to the sound and rhythm much more than to the verbal content” (Bigsby, DM 28). Quoting Mamet’s own words that “the whole truth lies in what you leave out” (124), the British professor of American literature observes that the succinctness and concision of his plays’ language becomes very crucial when we realise that what the characters do not say articulates more than what they say. Furthermore, In his comprehensive study of American drama, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama (1985) in three volumes as well as in his later book, Modern American Drama, 1945-2000 (2000), he has also studied the theatrical
career of David Mamet. In doing that, he has drawn comparison between Mamet’s work and the works of not only other dramatists but also novelists and thinkers – from Edward Albee to Tom Stoppard, from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Thorstein Veblen. If in his earlier book Bigsby thinks that the main concern of the plays is “American myth and reality (Bigsby, CITCAD 275), in the latter, however, he emphasises the mythical aspect as he believes that there is no reality in America reflected in the mirror of Mamet’s plays. The people in his America “are not what they seem (Bigsby, MAD 201). The characters in his plays are not complete and, being aware of that, try to fill the gap with the stories and fantasies they fabricate. They are storytellers who create their own world in the play in which they exist (210). Bigsby insists that Mamet has created a realistic world regarding the plot, character and language, whose problematic are his concern, instead of a real world “to deconstruct the assumptions of realism” (Bigsby, CITCAD 287). It is surface realism. He reckons that the world of his plays is the ‘terrifying blank’ and collapsed one, in which there is no relationship, no security, no past and future, but the ‘threatening’ present moment and its fears. That is why the inhabitants of his plays are fond of telling stories with the help of which they mask their fears. Bigsby is of the view that his characters indulge in the distortion of language, falsifying values, and resort to perverse fabrication of necessity to some ‘cultural’ needs of the people or forces that construct the myths of nation controlling them. In his view, however, every work of David Mamet has a deep longing for the ‘trust’ and ‘humanism,’ which is denied in every part of his plays by the characters’ betrayal, and the very same contradiction is what Bigsby regards as the real strength of his dramatic oeuvre.

William Demastes also has similar observations on the plays of Mamet. He believes that his plays try to disclose the social and cultural constructs and forces, which, in fact, control and corrupt the people. In his Beyond Naturalism: A New Realism in American Theatre, Demastes, apart from mentioning the similarities between David Rabe’s works and that of David Mamet, notes that the main engagement of his plays is the ‘spiritually lost culture’ and the inability of regaining it (Demastes 67). He spots the deconstructive treatment of realism and language – to use them and to unravel ‘cracks’ in their surface – in Mamet’s plays. Unlike his naturalist and modernist predecessors’ treatment, Mamet finds it a very unique way of dramatising with a particular strength, which “lies in his use of language” (68). He has deconstructed the Aristotelian notions by using and subverting the classic plot, in
which humans reveal themselves through action, whereas Mamet makes the characters reveal themselves through speech. Demastes views what Mamet calls the ‘well-made structure’ of his plays as only ‘a sort of compromise with the audience’ in order to let them not be shocked with what lies beneath it – disrupted societal chaos. In fact, his ultimate aim “is to present a world where language is deceptive, unreliable” (72). Demastes also notices David Mamet’s interest in using the American myths and challenging their presumptions, such as American Dream and those constructed by what Demastes labels America’s ‘dream factory’ (92).

Michael Quinn also comments on the realism in Mamet’s dramaturgy as a ‘performative realism.’ In Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition, edited by William Demastes, Quinn examines ‘anti-theatricality and American ideology’ reflected in Mamet’s plays. He discerns that the playwright questions the contexts of American naturalised ideology via his ‘not representational but expressive realism’ where the truth is not ‘a priori reality’ but culturally constructed (Quinn 235-36). He observes critically most of the plays as ‘theatrical games’ where everything is illusory. The business is scam, the love is lied, the truth is constructed ‘by the machinery of illusion making,’ and the language becomes a hide-out or cover for the world of failed relationships – “just a matter of personal preservation” (244).

By the same token but with a different terminology, William Herman considers Mamet’s dramatic techniques beyond naturalism and believes that, for instance, the profanity of his language is constructed one, ‘used’ by his characters for the concealment of their feeling (Herman 130). His Understanding Contemporary America Drama studies Mamet’s career and stresses on relations with different manifestations as the ‘obsessive theme’ of his plays. Herman notices that Mamet’s theatre is a trenchant critique of American way of life, filled with desperation, failed relationships and ‘murderous’ business ethics.

Exactly the same idea is elaborated in Anne Dean’s David Mamet: Language as Dramatic Action. She argues that all the characters of Mamet’s work are desperate because of the society they inhabit but cannot or do not want to change and their ‘frustration’ is dramatized through their use of obscenities as one of the ways (Dean 33). Other purposes pursued by this kind of language are, according to Ms. Dean, to retain rhythm in the over all structure of the plays, to conceal the fear by the characters, to illustrate the bond between them, and to show the social class to which the ordinary characters belong. Indeed, confirming the opinion of critic Robert Storey,
she remarks that Mamet’s characters are what their language decides them to be. She echoes the words of Samuel Beckett for the world of David Mamet’s theatre: “here the form is content, content is form” (15), where the language with its poetry and rhythm becomes the shape of the play itself. She scrutinises how Mamet has utilised the roughest form of vernacular language to create the most lyrical and poetical dialogues of American Theatre. She quotes Mamet himself saying that he cares very much about ‘the metric scansion of everything I write’ even the word ‘fucking’ (18). On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the toughness of their language is a device for the characters of Mamet’s world to hide their desperation, their fear of loneliness, and their loss. The references to sex, violence, gambling, gangsters, etc in the language of his characters are only a cover-up for the emptiness of their world (25). His language with extreme economy of expression, she comments, becomes action to reveal the ‘spiritual malaise’ in the United States, to draw the audience’s attention to the ‘corrupt and venal culture’ of the society and to make them ask themselves why it is so.

In the introduction to The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet edited by Christopher Bigsby, he considers Mamet as a man of strong political ideas but not with a political theatre in the sense of Arthur Miller’s or Clifford Odets. He considers the playwright a political one because his characters are alienated, their language hollowed of any humanity, without any past or future; because he is like Harold Pinter when his plays deal with the relationship between the language and power; and because his world is like the world of Samuel Beckett in its absurdity that is not ‘cosmic’ natural but “a product of the substitution of material for spiritual meaning” (Bigsby 5). The companion includes twelve essays scrutinising chronologically the whole career of David Mamet, three of which concern the three plays which are now considered as the classics of American theatre: American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross, and Oleanna embodying precisely those three reasons for Bigsby to call Mamet’s theatre political.

The study shall examine not chronologically, but thematically, a number of major works of Mamet as illustrative examples of his attempts at demythologising American popular myths. The Duck Variations, The Woods, Oleanna, Lakeboat, Prairie du Chien, Edmond, American Buffalo, Sexual Perversity in Chicago, Glengarry Glen Ross, and Speed-the-Plow will be discussed individually and collectively in three chapters with, of course, cross-references to other plays of the
playwright within the social, aesthetic and mythical context in the framework of deconstructive postmodernism, demythologising. The plays have been chosen for the study because of the nature of exclusion and inclusion of the hypothesis. It was found that the concept of demythologising is more relevant in relation to the selected plays than it is in context of the excluded ones. Furthermore, like any other study, the present one also has its own limitations of scope and range. Moreover, as the selected plays are thematically ordered in the chapters, the chronological order of the plays' production does get disturbed.

The first chapter, under the title of “Private Myths” shall include three of his plays, *The Duck Variations, The Woods and Oleanna*, examining the demythologising of the private myths. The first two were written in 1970s while the third one was written in 1990s. They have been chosen because of a lot of reasons, one of which is that all these plays deal with the breakdown of communication, which occurs because of the retreat of the characters into their private world of symbols, dreams and myths either due to alienation, conscious withdrawal from social reality, or desire for dominance and empowerment. It is in this state that private myths are born and created mainly as tools of self-survival. This is what causes rupture of communication. In *Duck Variation*, two lonely retired men, sitting in the park, isolated from the society, are trying to communicate aimlessly, even attempt to set up an analogy between the ducks and the humans. Or in *The Wood*, the young man and woman are talking to each other, seemingly enjoying their holiday, while each has his/her own reason for coming together – boy for having sex and girl for expressing her love. In *Oleanna*, both the teacher and the student live and operate in their own orbit of rules while trying to win over each other. The purpose is to explain the nature of these private myths and discuss their relationship to language.

The second chapter, “Social Myths and Dystopia,” shall focus on the other three plays of David Mamet: *Edmond, Lakeboat and Prairie du Chien*. While the first play was written in 1982, the other two are from 1970s. All the plays deal with the trope of journey, a significant American myth, as the creation of America is a result of a series of journeys. Mamet, in these plays, has systematically subverted the whole idea of the journey by sending the characters on a journey which leads nowhere. *Edmond* leaves home to find peace, but ends up in jail. And *Lakeboat*’s crew are in an endless circuit between two sides of a lake, which stops for loading and unloading temporarily. And the train in *Prairie du Chien* heads towards the west.
while both the story told by a storyteller and a game played by two passengers end in violence when the train stops for a short time at the station of Prairie du Chien to cool the engine.

The third chapter under the title of “Hollywood-promoted Myths” shall include four other plays of Mamet: Speed-The-Plow, American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross and Sexual Perversity in Chicago focusing on the commercial/cultural, naturalised myths of American society, particularly the myths of American Dream and Sexuality. The first and the third plays are the works of 1980 whereas the other two were written in 1970s. Sexual Perversity in Chicago and Speed-The-Plow have sexuality at their thematic centre and the other two, considered very analogous, have business at their domain. As Hollywood has played an increasingly significant role in shaping and promoting the social and cultural paradigms of the American society, David Mamet’s interest in categorizing and subverting some of these stereotypical cultural paradigms or naturalised myths shall be traced in these plays. It is a society in which certain manufactured myths are followed as the ‘natural’ reality. The characters of Speed-The-Plow are challenged in a competition to win the deal of a film production and survive; and sex, love, and friendship just become the means for getting success. In American Buffalo, characters believe that they have a right in a democracy to do everything to get what they want. It is again manifested in Glengarry Glen Ross, where some Realtors rob, lie, and flatter to do business in order to survive and get better off, and the world of characters, particularly the male ones, in Sexual Perversity in Chicago is likened to the Hollywood movies in terms of its obsession with violence and sexuality. The last chapter of the present study shall conclude what the project has tried to hypothesise in the previous chapters and reflect the total outcome of various discussions. This shall be done in order to reach a unique, comprehensive understanding of Mamet’s selected plays. It shall also discuss convergences and divergences in David Mamet’s plays and try to tie up the loose ends. In this chapter, an overall assessment of the plays and the playwright shall also be made.