Chapter Three

(Challenging) Hegemonic Masculinity

There’s something about American violence that to me is very touching. In full force, it’s very ugly, but there’s also something moving about it because it has to do with humiliation. There’s some hidden, deeply-rooted thing in the Anglo male American that has to do with inferiority, that has to do with not being a man, and always, continually, having to act out some idea of manhood that is invariably violent.

SHEPARD

The Tooth of Crime, the most original and archetypically American of all Shepard’s plays, was written in 1972 in England where Shepard had escaped after some personal and career problems. Life had become difficult for him since he was into a lot of drugs then. In 1971, accompanied with his wife and son, Shepard headed for London where he directed several productions of his own plays, and wrote some new works, including The Tooth of Crime (1972). It was rock-and-roll bands in London which attracted Shepard and he moved there to become a rock star.

Shepard “had been a drummer since childhood, and even before Patti Smith pegged him as ‘a rock-and-roll Jesus with a cowboy mouth,’ he had played drums on and off for three years (and two albums) with the Holy Modal Rounders, and with two Rounder spin-off bands, the Moray Eels and Lothar and the Hand People” (DeRose 53). Shepard yearned to be a rock-and-roll star but he was in real a gifted playwright. As he failed to acquire musical prominence in London, Shepard wrote his rock-and-roll tragedy, The Tooth of Crime, which demonstrates most of his almost early plays’ central ideas and imageries within itself.

The imprisoned rock stars of Melodrama Play and Cowboy Mouth; the father/son
Oedipal pairing of old and young in *Back Bog Beast Bait* and *The Holy Ghostly*; the battle between the authentic old and the menacing new in *Operation Sidewinder*; the juxtaposing of pop culture idiolects in *The Unseen Hand* and *Mad Dog Blues*; and, at the center of it all, the rock-and-roll music that appeared more and more frequently in the texts of Shepard’s plays: all these elements are dramatically united in *The Tooth of Crime*. (DeRose 52)

Theatre researchers often consider Shepard’s move to London in 1971 as the beginning of the second stage of his playwriting career. The rock drama, *The Tooth of Crime* is Shepard’s most notable work from this period. “It certainly established his peculiar blend of imaginative language and pop-cultural debris” (Shewey 6). Shepard later revised it as *The Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)* in 1996. The play narrates the story of two rock stars, Hoss and Crow, whose fight for prominence in the music industry looks a lot like the actions of gunfighters in the Old West. They are pitted in mortal combat against each other in a setting which is “variously described as surreal and expressionistic. The aging star, Hoss, loses out to the rising star, Crow, and the result is the fall of a code, replaced by empty but dazzling style, meaningless but catchy language—a hollow aesthetic” (Demastes, *Beyond Naturalism* 102). Language plays an essential role in the play since Shepard utilizes urban slang, rock lyrics, and other pop idioms in place of the usual weapons of gunfighters. At the end of the play, Hoss, realizing that the language he uses for *dueling* is old-fashioned, commits suicide. Crow attains authority until the next challenger comes along. “Shepard wants the awareness (or consciousness) to be directed toward his central concern, which involves codes, the loss of them in modern American society. His works decry the loss of old codes as well as the fact that new codes can no longer be prescriptively substituted” (Demastes, *Beyond Naturalism* 103). The new forms formed by new ethic have not been capable of reclaiming or replacing what is lost.

The play displays Hoss, rock-and-roll hero, as an American outlaw. He is dressed in black leather. He is rock star, gangster, drug addict, and gunfighter whose vague work, the game, is populated with hit men, astrologers, disc jockeys, sports cars, and rock-and-roll music. Hoss is trapped in his public image. He is surrounded by a group of advisers and followers who are from different background he has experience. Becky, his beautiful girlfriend, is gangster companion in
criminal world and a follower. Doc, Hoss’s private physician and personal adviser, has come from TV westerns and in addition to cowboy advice provides Hoss with illicit drugs. Cheyenne is Hoss’s driver and similarly encompasses both the traits of a TV western helper and the skill of a race car mechanic. He is ingenious technician and trustworthy companion.

*The Tooth of Crime* shares some characteristics with classical tragedy. Hoss is advised by two seers: Star-Man, who reads the astrological signs like ancient oracles, and Galactic Jack, a disc jockey, who is dressed like a pimp and studies pop charts. In the first act of the play, Hoss meets them separately. Early episodes are divided by monologues. These monologues function as the choral chants of ancient tragedy in which Hoss sings and expresses his secret thoughts and personal feelings.

Like classical tragic heroes, Hoss ignores the warnings of his seers and this brings about his downfall. His tragic flaw or deficiency lies in the fact that he goes *against the charts* and disregards prophetic powers of seers. Hoss’s first rank in the game is threatened by Crow, a young gypsy rebel who overlooks the *code* and depends on his own cruelty and boldness to stay alive. Like a gangster, “Crow has ‘hit’ several of Hoss’s territories, including the capital of both crime and entertainment, Las Vegas”. Having ‘marked’ Hoss, Crow now rides into the town to meet Hoss in personal battle . . . And, like a James Dean street racer, Crow is identified by the car he drives–a ’58 black Impala, fuel injected, bored and stroked, full blown Vet underneath.’” (DeRose 54). When he arrives Hoss’s hiding place, he acts according to style of a 1960s rock star, just like *Keith Richards* (227).

Language serves as both the means of illustrating pop culture and the weapon in the duel between Hoss, the old master and Crow, young competitor.

The stylistic battle between Hoss and Crow successfully encompasses the various cultural and thematic polarities that Shepard had struggled to express in plays such as *Operation Sidewinder*, *The Unseen Hand*, *Mad Dog Blues*, and *Back Bog Beast Bait*. In a variety of guises, these plays juxtapose the old with the new, the authentic with the synthesized, the emotional and spiritual with the technological and mass-produced, the
cowboy with the city hipster, and the past with the future. (DeRose 54)

In *The Tooth of Crime*, Hoss is the genuine and talented artist of the old school of rock-and-roll, whose ideas have root in America. He follows his own personal strict style. It is his experiences and emotions that form his being. Instead, Crow is merciless and has his style changes as he sees a need for. He takes on any mask and masters any style at will. He has no fixed identity and “does not exist without his self-created mask” (DeRose 65). He sings: “I believe in my mask. . . . The man I made up is me” (232).

For Shepard, language plays a major role in introducing characters. In the verbal conflict between Hoss and Crow which occurs in the second act of the play, Hoss adopts different voices. “The images of American jazz, the Delta blues, Creole, the old West, gangsters, are all variations of Hoss’s own experience, his connection to the styles of the American heartland that gave birth to his own way of talking and singing. Crow’s language is rootless; it does not come out of himself but out of the moment’s need: he can jump anywhere and everywhere, adopt whatever style he needs” (DeRose 54-55). His language is cold and tough as his adopted persona:


When Hoss advises Crow to learn from his own origins, Crow replies, “I’m a Rocker, not a hick!” (239).

For Crow the game is just a game not a necessity. He plays the game only to win as Hoss does. At the end of the play, Hoss shows Crow that he plays the *game* with all he has. He further adds that he is a born marker who is capable of doing the last act which shows his genius and bravery. An act that Crow, the empty stylist, cannot be capable of at all. Hoss puts a gun to his mouth and pulls its trigger. He commits suicide in front of the victorious Crow who looks at him. Crow
confesses that Hoss was a genius mark. But Hoss’s suicide does not influence calculating Crow. Soon after Hoss’s agonizing action, he throws away his title as hastily as he has won it and makes decision to run off the game before being caught up with it. “I’m throwin’ the shoes away. I’m runnin’ flat out to a new course” (250). Although, the game means everything to Hoss who is a real player, it means nothing for Crow who is an empty stylist.

Crow is the epitome of postmodern America. He is “the mask without a face, the speaker of a language that has no roots and no meaning beyond its pure intensity of style. He is an inhabitant of the realm of the simulacra where there is no meaning to be found beneath the surface of floating images” (DeRose 55). His opposing figure, Hoss, is demonstrating a time when in America style was the outer expression for the real being of the American people. Hoss is the artist who respects the rules of the game and his work communicates his actual self. As a player, he realizes the importance of the system in which he has been brought up. “Crow is the stylist, the self-created star whose ‘art’ is a combination of whatever stolen bits of others’ work will bring success; he is the parasite who exploits the loophole in the system to his own end” (DeRose 55-56). Shepard juxtaposes the contradictory images of the past and present America. Hoss and Crow stand for an appreciated America of the past and the real America of the present respectively. The new one mocks the values of the old one that results in loss and despair. DeRose in the fourth chapter of his book on Sam Shepard under the title “Pop American Pastiche” states:

No longer intending to unfix reality, Shepard juxtaposes various pop culture realities or milieus in an attempt to express the media-fed consciousness of the American public. He gathers archetypal characters and master narratives not from classical or mythical sources but from such American pop culture sources as the B-movie (the western, the sci-fi thriller, and the gangster film), and he freely mixes them with characters-and images from American folklore rock-and-roll, comic books, television, and car racing. The result is a postmodern, intertextual pastiche of American popular culture in which Shepard is torn between declaring the official death of the old cultural myths and lamenting their loss. (40-41)
Music is inherent part in Shepard’s style of writing and several times in the 1960s and early 1970s he had tried out its impact upon language successfully. His intention was to heighten the emotional qualities of the language. Shepard combined language with music since he was inspired by the rock poet Patti Smith with whom he had collaboration. Smith incanted poems accompanied with harsh electric rock-and-roll rhythms in poetry performances which were often completely different from the spoken rhythm of her poetry. In *The Tooth of Crime*, Shepard blends language with music most notably and skillfully.

*HOSS and CROW* begin to move to the music, not really dancing but feeling the power on their movements through the music. They each pick up microphones. They begin their assaults just talking the words in rhythmic patterns, sometimes going with the music, sometimes counterpointing it. As the round progresses the music builds with drums and piano coming in, maybe a rhythm guitar too. Their voices build so that sometimes they sing their words or shout. The words remain as intelligible as possible like a sort of talking opera. (234)

When Hoss and Crow are engaged in their duel of verbal styles, the music is intended to intensify emotion. In an interview with Kenneth Chubb, regarding music Shepard states:

It depends what you mean by music. I think music’s really important, especially in plays and theatre—it adds a whole different kind of perspective, it immediately brings the audience to terms with an emotional reality. Because nothing communicates emotions better than music, not even the greatest play in the world. . . . I wanted the music in *Tooth of Crime* so that you could step out of the play for a minute, every time a song comes, and be brought to an emotional comment on what’s taking place in the play. When you go back to the play you go back to the spoken word, then when a song comes again, it takes you out of it just a little bit. (Marranca 201)

The war of styles between Hoss and Crow is very similar to the subject of a play by Bertolt Brecht who is considered to be the most important innovator of music theatre in the twentieth
Brecht’s play, *Jungle of Cities* (1923), is a confrontation between two men: a battle of style put against the gangster-ridden setting of Chicago. Even though Shepard was deeply attracted to Brecht and was influenced by his musical dramas, “*The Tooth of Crime* suggests a contradiction between Brecht’s didactic intentions and Shepard’s emotional ones” (DeRose 74). It seems that Shepard has attempted to create a play which is a wonderful amalgamation of the salient features of classical tragedy and those of Brecht’s innovative plays.

R. W. Connell uses the term *hegemony* to signify a social superiority and dominance attained in a conflict of social forces that extends beyond fight of power into the private life and cultural processes. According to him, the term does not apply simply to dominance attained by arms. Rather, the ascendancy is embedded in religious doctrine and practice and mass media content, for instance. People are persuaded, for example, by means of media that certain social institutions are normal or acceptable. “In other words, certain assumptions become popularized as common sense” (MacKinnon 9). *Hegemonic masculinity* was first named and introduced to sociologists by Connell in 1987. It was applied to a set of assumptions and beliefs about masculinity that were rationally acceptable. Women, homosexual or effeminate men are subordinated to hegemonic masculinity. It defines what it means to be a man and ensures the dominance of some men within the gender system. In general, research on hegemonic masculinity intends to identify those sorts of men who enjoy power and authority of any kind. Moreover, it explains how social relationships which allow them ascendancy appear to be legitimate and unquestioned. “Hegemonies of various sorts are given shape in popular culture by journalists, politicians, and mass media. Masculine hegemony is formed from the people’s common sense by; perhaps above all, television, film, advertising and sport as relayed to and received by huge audiences. Media can, though, also help to create and bolster the audience’s common sense” (MacKinnon 9-10). Black men, working-class men, and homosexual men are excluded from hegemonic masculinity. “Recent writers would argue that this form of hegemony has constantly to be renegotiated within an ever-changing social structure. After all, it is best understood in relation to what it excludes and what it seeks to dominate. Put simply, if hegemonic masculinity is a means for certain men to dominate women and other men, then as these latter categories change so must the former category” (MacKinnon 10).
In rock-drama, *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), Shepard skillfully delineates defining characteristics of dominative hegemonic masculinity in the character of Hoss and describes the fact that male identity of any kind is merely a performance and has not a fundamental core. The climax of the play occurs in “the second--act showdown between Hoss, the reigning star ‘Marker’ (whatever mixture of rocker and killer Shepard means that to be), and Crow, his upstart challenger” (Shewey, Identity Dance 290). Crow challenges Hoss’s dominative hegemonic masculinity. “The play’s action depicts the cosmic ‘show down’ between Hoss, the gifted ‘killer’ who has labored to the top of the rock-gangster confederation, and Crow, the upstart rocker who pursues a renegade path to fame and glory” (Wade 54). An examination of *The Tooth of Crime*, effectively will assist to depict fracturing of hegemonic masculine identity.

In Shepard’s drama, characters do not enjoy of a consistent and unified identity. They only attain fractured identity. Apparently identity and persona become intertwined. Masculine identity is presented by masks and personas that are drawn from American myths and icons of maleness: the cowboy, the gangster, the rock star, the artist. Mythic figures have always fascinated Shepard. The cowboy, movie stars, and rock singers recur in his works. *The Tooth of Crime* restages the problem of male identity present throughout Shepard’s early plays. Exploring male identity *The Tooth of Crime* would seem to be related to American maleness. The idea of masculinity is performed in a way that resists any fixity. *The Tooth of Crime* describes the fact that male identity has not an essential core and is just a performance. In *The Tooth of Crime*,

The performance of self or the story of self becomes synonymous with the self. The play’s main characters, Hoss and Crow, operate under the principle that the stories they tell and the way they tell them create who they are. However, Hoss has become uneasy with mere performance and wonders if there is not an essence to which his performances might be anchored. *Tooth* is the ultimate duel of identities based on presentation alone - on style, gesture, and attitude. This duel resonates with masculine images taken from western showdowns, organized crime, sports competitions, and, of course, rock and roll. (McDonough 44)
Hoss works for an unnamed industry. “The anarchy of Hoss’s youth has been molded to fit the official rules of the industry. He abides by a code, set up by the industry and monitored by referees, which has caught him in the paradox that he can be true to himself only by following the rules set up by someone else” (McDonough 44). Becky tells him, “the only way to be an individual is in the game” (219). Hoss knows that he is “stuck in [his] image” (224) and wishes for a self distinct from the game. He tells his manager, “Ya’ know, you’d be O.K. Becky, if you had a self. So would I. Something to fall back on in a moment of doubt or terror or even surprise” (225). Hoss comprehends that the gestures and styles he owns does not mean to have a self, and this finding makes him fear both the game and his place in it. Evidently, he has not been able to find ideas of self and an essence within the game so he aspires for it.

Hoss is threatened by Crow, a gypsy killer, who performs his functions outside the game and disregards the code. Crow is controlled by the system and obviously does not stand lengthy time to confront the uncertainties that bother Hoss. In contrast to Hoss, he does not yearn for an original self. He tells Hoss that “image shots are blown” (229), and accepts self as plainly a performance without an essence: “But I believe in my mask--The man I made up is me. And I believe in my dance--And my destiny” (232).

It seems that Crow accepts masks as the single truth; hence he clinches to the life of the gypsy who is perpetually and continuously wandering and never sticks to a specific place or person.

The contest between Hoss and Crow “is not simply over territory (‘turf’) or ‘styles’ but over a specific type of identity that reflects Shepard’s images of masculinity, images he connects to that of the ‘original,’ the maverick, the cowboy” (McDonough 44). Even though, an emphasis has been placed on competition in this play, it is not important who wins the duel but who can continue playing the game. Play for Shepard means “a denial of the labor of adult life” (McDonough 44). Thus, play is associated with youth and that Shepard associates youth with the image of rebellious and insubordinate cowboys. In The Tooth of Crime, the aging Hoss becomes uncertain about the game as a ‘game’ or industry
or labor and loses control over his performances and does not know how to play the game anymore.

Hoss is the best in his occupation and has become a part of the industry which controls him and his career. “He is no longer independent, free, self-proclaiming, self-creating as is Crow and has thus lost the edge that perpetual ‘playing’ gives Crow. Crow, the outsider, the gypsy, actually retains more qualities of traditional masculinity (calling his own shots, free from doubt, independent) than Hoss does precisely” (McDonough 45). Hoss is supposed to be manipulated by others. Even though Hoss performs as a habitual cowboy and suddenly makes Crow feel uncertain and worried for a short time, Crow overpowers Hoss through captivating his style literally and performing Hoss until Hoss stops to perform since he cannot play the game anymore.

When Hoss is conquered by Crow, the master chameleon, the differences between the two men are highlighted through their different reactions to this outcome. Hoss asks Crow to teach him the secret about a self to fall back upon that he yearned for in return for Hoss’s turf despite his belief that turf as a space is his freedom and power.

HOSS. All right. The turf's yours. The whole shot. Now show me how to be a man.
CROW. A man’s too hard. Leathers. Too many doors in that room. A Gypsy’s Easy. (243)

What Hoss craves for is to be a real man. He believes that Crow as the strong winner ought to have knowledge about how to be a man. But Crow believes that being a man is too hard and does not prefer being a man over any other image or performance. Crow points out that he favors performing like a gypsy to performing like a man. He privileges the gypsy life specifically because no rule or fixed image is required for it. Being interested in gypsy play of multiple identities, Crow abandons the essence Hoss looks for. Eventually, neither the power position of Hoss nor Crow’s flight answer Hoss’s question concerning how to be a man. They work in the midst of a perplexed mixture of images
and identities and merely the one who keeps moving stays alive.

These characters are acquiring images chosen from popular culture. Crow simply takes Hoss’s style, territory, and place. But Hoss does not want images or imitation of images: “A true gesture that won’t never cheat on itself ’cause it’s the last of its kind. It can’t be taught or copied or stolen or sold. It’s mine. An original. It’s my life and my death in one clean shot” (249).

Hoss’s single opportunity to prove his identity is suicide by which all the signs and significations he has shaped will be frozen in time and become fixed eternally in death, and thus will be possessed just by him. His act of suicide is his last art as a real man and this final art like Keat’s “Grecian Urn” will make his picture as an iconic individual eternal. His gesture will remain original since it cannot be repeated or reproduced. Literally when a person commits suicide it is a one-time shot which cannot be replayed. Suicide as a form of dying well in the old style is used to indicate a final confirmation of a man’s worth.

HOSS. Yeah. You win all right. All this. Body and soul. All this invisible gold. All this collection of torture. It’s all yours. You’re the winner and I’m the loser. That’s the way it stands. But I’m losin’ big, Crow Bait. I’m losin’ to the big power. All the way. I couldn’t take my life in my hands while I was alive but now I can take it in death, I’m a born Marker Crow Bait. That’s more than you’ll ever be. Now stand back and watch some true style. The mark of a lifetime. A true gesture that won’t never cheat on itself ’cause it’s the last of its kind. It can’t be taught or copied or stolen or sold. It’s mine. An original. It’s my life and my death in one clean shot. (249)

Hoss’s suicide is aimed at claiming his original identity and has an iconic importance to the audience who is acquainted with Hollywood westerns. But this significance is weakened by Crow who speaks the final words of the play.

Hoss’s suicidal act makes Crow think of it as the old creed. After Hoss commits suicide,
Cheyenne tells Crow, “you got big shoes to fill Gypsy,” but Crow replies, “That’s fer lames. I’m throwin’ the shoes away. I’m runnin’ flat out to a new course” (250). Crow rejects Hoss’s style completely and chooses to escape the fixed position in which Hoss has died. Hoss’s dying moment is somehow ambiguous. Crow affirms that it is not steadiness or immutability that concerns a hero. What concerns a hero is to move, remain alive and continue playing the game. Crow selects the endless play of ideas of self in the cost of essential concepts of being hero. “By refusing to lock himself into any image, he aspires not to be blown apart as Hoss was but to accept identity as a performance rather than as a fixed and attainable essence. He privileges adolescent ‘play’ over adult ‘labor’ and, significantly, ends up the survivor of the duel” (McDonough 46). Hoss’s suicide is a defiant act. Even though it is an admission of defeat, it is undeniably gracious according to the traits attributed to hegemonic masculinity. It shows Hoss’s mental toughness. Through suicide, Hoss depicts his independent and competitive nature. He cannot live without his hegemonic characteristics. He struggles to keep his power and be privileged over Crow. Traditionally, suicide was the peak of bravery which a hero could commit when confronting with irresolvable problems.

Violent and aggressive male behavior is accepted as a normal part of hegemonic masculinity. “It seems to be culturally believed that violence is a natural, practically genetic component of masculinity” (MacKinnon 12). In The Tooth of Crime, Shepard’s most impressive play, noticeable violence is successfully communicated through masculine actions as well as through language and music as defining features of Hegemonic Masculinity.

The play stages a macho competition which has mythical implications. This battle is a style war or match between rock star, Hoss and his rival, Crow. Like two gunfighters they protect their territory. Victory depends more on the invention and mastery of a unique language and powers of tongue and self-assertion than physical strength. The duel is about the status and power of words. The values of honesty and authenticity are in contrast with those of unpredictability and recombination. Language aggressions are altered into images or displaced into song. “The Tooth of Crime has always been the most dazzling and well-regarded of Shepard’s pre-family plays. A lethal showdown between two killer rock stars, it is an unconventional hybrid of play and
musical, and its dense patches of invented pop-culture neo-lingo (part computerspeak, part hipster jive, part sci-fi comic book) make it both challenging and fun to undertake” (Shewey, Identity Dance 289).

Crow, the young artist and popular singer, defeats Hoss, the old established one, in personal combat. Though this battle seems wholly contemporary, it is especially interesting because it actually employs an ancient mythical pattern. The form of the battle or verbal duel between two singers goes back to the practice of ancient epics in all cultures. For this, Shepard invents a strikingly odd language and positions the play’s strength on its language which is a combination of the slangs related to the fields of rock, astrology, crime, and sports. “A good deal of this play has been written in an ‘invented language’ derived from contemporary American idioms such as sports vernacular, criminal slang and musicians’ jargon” (Cushman 370).

In this play, Shepard creates “a texture of language and music that echoes these distinctly American traditions and concerns by using songs, slangs, profanity, quotations from rock hits, and words themselves as music. The form is surreal, yet anchored in a realistic frame, the rock music scene” (Oliver 371). Besides language, as stated by Oliver, music functions a crucial role in the play. Rock is also a kind of music which commentators regard it as contributing to a sense of violence. Shepard believes that “rock is about violence, a sacred criminal violence with its own standards and values. Tooth applies the realization that if denied a living historical base, a continuity of myth, past and present, then such violence is empty, and ultimately self-destructive. Rock was the theatre in which an entire generation enacted precisely the same cultural disillusionment” (Coe 59).

The use of music in Shepard’s plays, then, has several primary functions. First, it communicates the emotional perspective of either a character or situation, or the thematic center of a work; it establishes mood and tone. Second, initiates a kind of communion, a community of involved listeners; and, since rock ‘n ’roll is rape, seduction through the release of energy and rhythm, it increases tension in a volatile scene. Third, through their lyrics, the songs provide another comment on some action or situation in the work and hence yet another link with the audience. (Powe 373)
Besides concentration on language and music, violent actions and aggressive behavior are focused on. In the beginning of the play, it is said that the stage is empty except for “an evil-looking black chair with silver studs and a very high back, something like an Egyptian Pharaoh’s throne” (203). The chair signifies the power struggle which is the controlling idea of the play. “Set in a dramatic realm that fuses rock culture and science fiction, The Tooth of Crime is dominated by one imposing piece of scenery, a nefarious looking black chair, which serves as an ominous emblem of the powers, pleasures, and pitfalls of rock stardom” (Wade 54). All through act I, “Hoss, isolated with his entourage to determine when the time is right for his next hit (a word which takes on double meaning as both a musical success and a violent attack), nervously evaluates his current status” (Baechler and Litz 442). He seeks advice from Star-Man, his astrologer who looks like a science-fiction character. Star-Man warns him against a move for the precarious astronomical balance. Hoss gets angry and asks for information about the contest. The diction of the characters is unusual, a slang dialect all their own.

After that Hoss calls on the disc jockey Galactic Jack. Jack’s Billboard-type charts can locate Hoss’s position. He is described as “dressed like a 42nd Street pimp, pink shirt, black tie, black patent leather shoes, white panama straw hat and a flash suit” (209) which suggests “a strong association between financial exploitation and the music industry” (Baechler and Litz 443). Hoss proclaims, “They’re all countin’ on me. The bookies, the agents, the Keepers. I’m a fucking industry. I even affect the stocks and bonds” (225).

Galactic Jack predicts, “A shootin’ star, baby. High flyin’ and no jivin’. You is off to number nine”. But Hoss’s assistant and moll Becky arrives and says “Eyes sussed somebody’s marked you. . . . One a’ the Gypsies” (209). The word Gypsy indicates those who function as revolt against the code— the rules which control the game that Hoss is playing.

Hoss, the aging star, has always played according to the code and the charts, but he feels that he is now hopeless and doomed. Little by little, his fear converts to take a shape in the character of Crow, a gypsy killer. He is alerted through Eyes and warned by the charts of Galactic Jack that he is doomed. Hoss gets ready for his fate: “Stuck in my image” (224). He is
Hoss and Crow come together “in an elemental struggle for dominance that also invokes transitions in American youth culture between the early 1960’s and the mid 1970’s, the isolation of the artist, and the inherent violence in our society” (Baechler and Litz 442). This play is Shepard’s most Brechtian work, both for its typical use of song to comment on the action and its resemblance to Brecht’s early drama \textit{In the Jungle of Cities} (1922), a play subtitled \textit{The Fight Between Two Men in the Gigantic City of Chicago}. Shepard converts the conflict between Brecht’s central characters Garga and Shlink into the struggle for power between Hoss and Crow to delineate his fascination with “Brecht’s notion of American capitalism as combative” (Baechler and Litz 442).

In addition to language and rock music, signs of violent actions and aggressive behavior as defining traits of dominant hegemonic masculinity are concentrated on in the play. Becky brings “pearl-handled revolvers, pistols, derringers and rifles with scopes, shotguns broken down” (204). Hoss announces his desire to kill “I’m ready for a kill! . . . I can smell blood. . . . I’m just getting’ hungry that’s all. I need a kill. I haven’t had a kill for months now. You know what that’s like. I gotta kill. It’s my whole life. If I don’t kill I get crazy. I start eating away at myself. It’s not good. I was born to kill” (205-06). Hoss remembers that his father was also a killer “Pa told me what it was like. They were killers in their day too. Cold killers” (207). Becky verifies Hoss’s words “When we landed you, you were a complete beast of nature. A sideways killer. Then we molded and sharpened you down to perfection because we saw in you a true genius killer. A killer to end them all. A killer’s killer” (207).

The rest of Act I, Hoss is preparing for the arrival of Gypsy marker which is a serious threat to him. He calls on Doc to order a drug dosage and then says to Doc and Becky:

\begin{quote}
HOSS. Look at me now. Impotent. Can’t strike a kill unless the charts are right. Stuck in my image. Stuck in my mansion. Waiting. Waiting for a kid who’s probably just like me. Just like I was then. A young blood. And I gotta off him. I gotta roll him or he’ll roll me. We’re fightin’ ourselves. Just like turnin’ the blade on ourselves. Suicide, man . . . . Blow
\end{quote}
Hoss practices knife-fight drills with a dummy that bleeds every time he hits its organs. “Hoss picks up the knives and stalks the dummy. He circles it and talks to the dummy and himself. As he talks he stabs the dummy with sudden violent lunges then backs away again. Blood pours from the dummy onto the floor” (221). Hoss stabs different organs of the dummy: its heart, neck and stomach. Even though Hoss is not involved in a physical conflict with Crow, this violent action against the dummy demonstrates his aggressive nature as macho male and his desire for dominance.

Another indication of violence is when Hoss recalls about his high school days hanging out with Moose and Cruise. He explains how they had defeated eight strong buddies in a school day fight. “There were eight of ’em all crew cut and hot for blood. This was the old days ya’ know. So they started in on Cruise ’cause he was the skinniest. Smackin’ him around and pushin’ him into the car. . . . This was a class war. . . . We had all of ’em bleeding and cryin’ for Ma” (224). The same scene, Hoss explains how Cruise’s father had killed his mother “Got drunk and busted her in the head with a tire iron” (224).

In Act II, Hoss and Crow duel with words and music and a Referee keeps score. Crow enters at the opening of Act II and sings his first song: “But I believe in my mask—The man I made up is me / And I believe in my dance—And my destiny” (232). Crow “looks just like Keith Richard. He wears high-heeled green rock and roll boots, tight greasy blue jeans, a tight yellow t-shirt, a green velvet coat, a shark tooth earring, a silver swastika hanging from his neck and a black eye-patch covering the left eye” (227). His dialect is even more imagistic: “Got the molar chomps. Eyes stitched. You can vision what’s sittin’. Very razor to cop z’s sussin’ me to be on the far end of the spectrum” (227).

Subsequently the battle between Hoss and Crow is staged “as a boxing match” in three rounds. “The stage is equipped with bells and a referee. Shepard wrote some of his greatest poetic dialogue for this scene, matching diction and rhythm perfectly with the characters and their strengths” (Bacheler 443). In round I, Crow states that Hoss is a weak and disturbed person:

In round 2, Hoss tries to expose that Crow’s musical style is not strong. To accomplish his objective, his voice transforms into black/country one:

HOSS. You could use a little cow flop on yer shoes, boy. Yo’ music’s in yo’ head. You a blind minstrel with a phoney shuffle. You got a wound gapin’ ‘tween the chords and the pickin’. Chuck Berry can’t even mend you up. You doin’ a pantomime in the eye of a hurricane. Ain’t even got the sense to signal for help. You lost the barrelhouse, you lost the honkey-tonk. You lost your feelings in a suburban country club the first time they ask you to play “Risin’ River Blues” for the debutante ball. You ripped your own self off and now all you got is yo’ poison to call yo’ gift. You a punk chump with a sequin nose and you’ll need more’n a Les Paul Gibson to bring you home. (239)

But the referee announces the end of the round and they move to next round. In the third round, Crow announces that Hoss is unable to find a style or musical persona of his own:

CROW. Can’t get it sideways walkin’ the dog. Tries trainin’ his voice to sound like a frog. Sound like a Dylan, sound like a Jagger, sound like an earthquake all over the Fender. Wearin’ a shag now, looks like a fag now. Can’t get it together with chicks in the mag. Can’t get it together for all of his tryin’. Can’t get it together for fear that he’s dyin’. Fear that he’s crackin’ busted in two. Busted in three parts. Busted in four. Busted and dyin’ and cryin’ for more. Busted and bleedin’ all over the floor. All bleedin’ and wasted and tryin’ to score. (241)
Angry with the decision of the referee, Hoss immediately kills him. “Hoss lets loose a blood-curdling animal and runs to one of the pistols on the floor, picks it up and fires, emptying the gun into the REF. REF falls dead” (241).

Then Hoss tries to save his profession. He asks Crow to teach him the Gypsy style: “Just help me into the style. I’ll develop my own image. I’m an original man. . . . I just need some help” (241). He asks crow to show him “how to be a man” and get his turf in return (243). Crow teaches Hoss how to be a real man in a humorous way. He tells Hoss how to walk like he got knives on his heels; “talk like a fire”; use his “eyes like a weapon”; tighten or loosen his ass and cheek; and talk to his blood (243-45). But he has not the ability to have and use a new style. He is not able to “change personas like the chameleon Crow” (Baechler 444). Unable to play the game with Crow and to conform to Crow’s new style, Hoss chooses to die as a classical hero. “Hoss turns his back to the audience. And puts the gun in his mouth. He raises one hand high in the air and pulls the trigger with the other. He falls in a heap” (249). Shooting in his mouth which is a symbolic image, Hoss shows his extreme violence and demonstrates his hegemonic genuine masculinity. Crow is left behind, Crow admits that “Hoss was pretty tough. Went out in the old style” (249). Crow makes his effort to carry on his new position of prominence till he experiences a similar fate: “Now the power shifts and sits till a bigger wind blows” (250).

This heroic suicidal act of Hoss is foreshadowed when the play begins and Hoss sings “All the heroes is dyin’ like flies they say it’s a sign a’ the times”. Another incident which foreshadows Hoss’s suicide is news of Willard’s suicidal act in the first act. Hoss tells Becky that Little Willard is man and he trusts him. Then he asks Becky to bring Willard but she says that Willard is dead. “Shot himself in the mouth” (215). Later it is said that Hoss feels to be impotent and stuck in his image and waiting for a kid who is probably just like him:

HOSS. A young blood. And I gotta off him. I gotta roll him or he’ll roll me. We’re fightin’ ourselves. Just like turnin’ the blade on ourselves. Suicide, man. Maybe Little Willard was right. Blow your fuckin’ mouth and pull the trigger. That’s what we’re
doin’. He’s my brother and I gotta kill him. He’s gotta kill me. Jimmy Dean was right. Drive the fuckin’ Spider till it stings ya’ to death. Crack up your soul! Jackson Pollock! Duane All man! Break it open! Pull the trigger! Trigger me! Trigger you! (224)

*The Tooth of Crime* both depicts the music world and Shepard’s hesitant longing for the America and manifestations of American manhood of the era of the 1950s and early 1960s. “The combination of American dialect and icons with raw violence and energy epitomizes Shepard’s sense of his culture” (Baechler and Litz 445). Shepard’s concept of America is substantially depicted by the actions of violent male characters. Shepard merges rock music, specific language and violent action to achieve his goal, that is, to convey a sense of male aggression and chauvinism as inherent characteristics of Western hegemonic masculinity.

Michel Foucault is a key thinker in the matter of the construction of gender and sexuality. He thinks gender is well constructed and understood through *discourse*. Foucault believes that “social practices are constructed by the way that they can be spoken or thought about—conceptualized—in language. *Discourse* ultimately enforces ‘normalcy’. For Foucault, gender and sexuality are *discourses* that are entwined and mutually sustaining” (MacKinnon 5). According to Foucault, subject or the human individual has numerous identities. “One important method by which the subject acquires an identity is by differentiating itself from what is believed in discourse to be its opposite” (MacKinnon 5). For Foucault masculinity is a discourse. “The very fact that discourses are subject to change means that masculinity, subordinated and dominant/idealized/hegemonic varieties alike, changes—and is of necessity plural” (MacKinnon 11). Social science views gender as the product of human action. “Conceptions of masculinity result from discourse and social struggle” (MacKinnon 20). In *The Tooth of Crime*, Shepard stages two different discourses of dominant hegemonic masculinity, that is, the traditional discourse and modern one in dialogue with each other. “Discursive constructs of masculinity should not, therefore, be viewed as stable elements of institutions or of culture, since even as they are posited, they are resisted in numerous ways. . . . It is difficult to talk about male power per se, as a stable or monolithic phenomenon. It should be seen as a diffuse, complicated form of power in constant relation to opposing forms of gendered power” (Reeser 35). *The Tooth of Crime* includes in two acts. Act I expresses the discourse of the traditional hegemonic
masculinity. Act II, this discourse is differentiated from the novel one. Two diversified discourses are in dialogue with each other in the second Act. The manifestation of traditional hegemonic masculinity is represented in the character of Hoss while “the threat of novelty and iconoclasm” (Wade 55) is represented in the character of Crow.

In *The Tooth of Crime*, Hoss is a fugitive who dreams of living ‘outside the fucking law altogether’ (213); he sees himself as ‘a mover’ (218) and needs to wander. Yet he craves authenticity, and laments the ubiquitousness of image in ‘The Game’ of rock ’n’ roll performance culture that is his world: a Darwinian staging of competition and survival of the fittest where the winners know how to manipulate image. He wants to believe in an individual essence, a style that ‘can’t be taught or copied or stolen or sold’ (249), and the line from Stéphane Mallarmé that gives the play its title (“in your heart of stone there is dwelling / A heart that the tooth of no crime can wound”) signifies this yearning for a core of identity and Truth. On the other hand, Crow, a killer ‘Gypsy’ who does manage to live outside the laws of the game, is free from roots, from essence and stability, precisely because ‘There ain’t no heart to a Gypsy’ (221). (Saddik 132-33)

At the beginning of the play, Hoss enters a stage and sings a song that both evokes mood and foreshadows the theme of the play. Entitled “The Way Things Are” (203), the song suggests “the illusory nature of things, notably art” (Mustazza 376). The play demonstrates the theme that there is the possibility of “the simultaneous fall of the old order and the rise of the new” (Mustazza 376). In several of Shepard’s experimental plays characterised by truncated and fragmented dialogue, highly symbolic language, and characters lifted from the mythic discourses of Hollywood film, rock ’n’ roll or literature, Shepard is concerned with the postmodern question of essence versus appearance and the slipperiness of ‘authentic’ identity as it relates to image, particularly the image associated with artistic fame. Yet while his characters crave the stability of a fixed core identity and a return to origins, the inevitable contradiction is that they ultimately realize that freedom is possible only through fluidity, instability, movement. They must, therefore, remain fugitives and surge forward, never resting, despite their
desperate romantic need to cling to an unattainable ideal, a core of Truth. Stasis signifies death or confinement (a kind of death), and freedom lies in flexibility and individual agency, the ability to mould image(s) of the self and remain in process. (Saddik 131-32)

In Act I, Shepard “brilliantly places the event in a deadly sci-fi world where computers determine rankings and an interplanetary commission guards the rules or ‘codes’” (Gilman 362). Hoss, a successful sportsman/criminal/rock musician maintains the older style and humanness. He speaks of a time when they were warriors and there was a connection between style and being. The words and actions of Hoss and all other characters and even the songs in the first act all indicate the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity.

In Shepard’s plays women do not attain masks. They merely complicate men’s identity. Although men “need women to reflect their ideas of themselves, they also fear that women shut down the possibility for play by supposedly fixing a man in an image and holding him to it” (McDonough 43). Hoss, the aging star, is represented chiefly by the woman Becky, the first character encountering Hoss. “Becky is assertive and power-hungry. When Hoss complains that the code is too restrictive, that fame is proving to be too insular, and that it is not in his nature to conform to the degree expected of him, she responds with a repudiation of ‘nature’ as a value system” (Mustazza 377): “That’s what we saved you from, your nature. Maybe you forgot that. When we first landed you, you were a complete beast of nature. A sideways killer. Then we molded and shaped you and sharpened you down to perfection because we saw in you a true genius killer.” (207). Even though Hoss considers Becky as a controlling and limiting person, she plays the role of submissive and exploited follower. Becky is described as sex object “very tall and blonde” (204). She brings different kinds of weapons for Hoss (204) and does whatever Hoss orders. Hoss strokes her hair and asks her to sing him a song or something, something to cool him off (220). Even though Becky helps Hoss to manifest his dominant manliness, whenever Hoss sees a need he behaves her aggressively and uses curse words. For example, accepting that his “day is comin” (224) and that he is “A slave. An educated slave. . . . A trained slave” (225), he tells Doc and Becky: “Now beat it, both of ya’ before I rip your fucking teeth out a’ yer heads!! GO ON BEAT IT!!!” (225). Becky’s sexual role extends to reach its extreme form in the second Act. “She
caresses herself as though her hands were a man’s, feeling her tits, her thighs, her waist. . . . Her hands pull off her sweater. . . . Her hands rip off her bra and feel tits. . . . Her hands unzip her skirt and tear it off” (245-46).

Hoss’s hegemonic manhood is revealed through the conversations he has with other characters, his monologues and the songs he reads. When Becky leaves to bring Starman, Hoss talks to himself “That fuckin’ Scorpion gonna crawl if this gets turned around now. . . . I’m winning in three fucking States! The El Camino Boys. Bunch a’ fuckin’ punks. GET THAT FUCKER DOWN HERE!!!” (205). When Starman arrives with Becky, he tells him that he is ready for kill and that he can smell blood. Then Hoss expresses his anxiety of losing and readiness to fight with his competitor “I’m failin’ behind.” (205) “He’s trying to shake me. He thinks I’ll just jump borders and try suburban shots. Well he’s fuckin’ crazy. I’m gonna roll him good. . . . I know my power. I can go on Gypsy Kill and still gain status” (206-07). Hoss refers to the fact that his style is out of date and “too old fashioned” (207). After Starman leaves them alone, Becky approves him as the most powerful of all “They weren’t killers. . . . You’re a killer, man” (207).

Hoss’s second song “Cold Killer”, in Act I, reveals the dominant discourse of the time regarding the issue of hegemonic masculinity. The vocabularies and images of killer, blood, scorpion, snake, razor, shooting, faster action, power, silver studs, black gloves, tattoo, whiplash, John, and gun all convey the strength, power and ascendency which are the rudiments and defining characteristics of dominant masculinity.

“Cold Killer”
I’m a cold killer Mama—I got blood on my jeans
I got a Scorpion star hangin’ over me
I got snakes in my pockets and a razor in my boot
You better watch it don’t get you — It’s faster’n you can shoot
I got the faster action in East L.A.
I got the fastest action in San Berdoo
And if you don’t believe it lemme shoot it to you
Now watch me slide into power glide— supercharged down the line
There ain’t no way for you to hide from the killer’s eye
My silver studs, my black kid gloves make you cry inside
But there ain’t no way for you to hide from the killer’s eye
I’m a cold killer Mama—and I’ve earned my tattoo
I got a Pachooko cross hangin’ over you
I got whiplash magic and rattlesnake tongue
My John the Conqueroot says I’m the cold gun
Now watch me slide into power glide supercharged down the line
There ain’t no way for you to hide from the killer’s eye
My silver studs, my black kid gloves make you cry inside
But there ain’t no way for you to hide from the killer’s eye. (208-9)

The next person whom Becky brings in is D.J, Galactic Jack. Hoss asks him worriedly whether he is rising or falling.” (209). D.J makes him sure that “The course is clear. Maybe a few Gypsy Killers comin’ into the picture but nothin’ to fret your set. . . . These Gypsies is committin’ suicide. We got the power. We got the game. If the Keepers whimsy it all they do is scratch ’em out. Simple. They’re losers, man. . . . They won’t last, man Believe me” (210-11). But Hoss is still stressful “They could unseat us all”. Galactic Jack replies “Not a King. The crown sticks where it fits and right now it looks about your size. . . .You’re number one with a bullet” (211-12). Again he is alone and in a monologue he reveals his state of mind “I’m ready to take on any a’ these flash heads. Vegas is mine. It belongs in my pocket. The West is mine” (213). The third person who comes to visit Hoss is Cheyenne. Cheyenne is concerned about their reputation. He is afraid of throwing it away since they have worked hard to get where they are. Hoss tells him that they are not “Markers no more,” not “even Rockers” (214). “What’s happened to our killer heart. What’s happened to our blind fuckin’ courage! Cheyenne, we ain’t got much time, man. We were warriors once” (215). Then Hoss decides to meet Little Willard as his last chance. But Becky informs him that he is dead “Shot himself in the mouth” (215). In another monologue, Hoss says that “There is no sense of tradition in the game no more. There’s no game” (216). After getting help from the next person, Doc, Hoss getting feeling a need for change asks Becky
“You were one of the ones who taught me the code, Now you throw it away like that. . . . I think the whole system’s getting shot to shit. I think the code’s going down the tubes. These are gonna be the last days of honor” (217). Left alone by Doc, Becky again tries to give confidence to Hoss “But you’re here now. A hero. All those losers out there barkin’ at the moon. . . . Power. That’s all there is. The power of the machine. The killer Machine. That is what you live and die for. That’s what you wake up for. Every breath you take you breathe the power. You live the power. You are the power. . . . You’re a mover. . . . You’re on top. You’re free” (218). At last, Hoss makes his mind to have a shiv duel and practices stabbing the dummy Becky had brought violently. Then Doc provides him with cocaine. Consuming drug Hoss recalls a high-school rumble as class warfare. Hoss remembers his high school days hanging out with two buddies, Moose and Cruise. He remembers that the three of them were cruising for burgers at Bob’s Big Boy in Pasadena when a gang of eight crew-cut athletes from their school began a fight.

HOSS. This was a class war. These were rich white kids from Arcadia who got T-birds and deuce coups for Xmas from Mommy and daddy. All them cardigan sweaters and chicks with ponytails and pedal pushers and bubble hairdo’s. Soon as I saw that I flipped out. I found my strength. I started kicki’ shit, man. Hard and fast. Three of ‘em went down screamin’ and holdin’ their balls. Moose and Cruise went right into action. It was like John Wayne, Robert Mitchum and Kirk Douglas all in one movie. (223)

Hoss regards themselves as three movie stars--John Wayne, Robert Mitchum and Kirk Douglas--who are the famous emblems of manhood. Consummation of cocaine and reference to movie stars represents the deterioration of American culture, value system and the shallowness of drug- and media-obsessed culture.

Another monologue is then represented by Hoss in which he acquires both the role of his father and his own. Ann Wilson quotes from Richard Gilman that Shepard utilized “the idea of transformations . . . , in plays like Angel City, Back Bog Beast Bait and The Tooth of Crime where the characters become wholly different in abrupt movements within the course of the work, or speak suddenly as someone else, while the scene may remain the same” (306). The old Dad advices Hoss that “The road is what counts. Just look at the road. Don’t worry about where
Act I ends with the entrance of Crow and Cheyenne’s admission that Crow looks tougher than he thought. Cheyenne’s admittance of Crow’s toughness leads Hoss to speak his last monologue “Put that in your dream, Hoss, and sleep tight. Tomorrow you live or die” (226).

In Act II, Hoss’s supremacy is challenged and his throne is usurped by Crow. Hoss and Crow are represented as the emblems of traditional hegemonic masculinity and modern hegemonic masculinity respectively. Hoss speaks and acts in accordance with the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity and Crow speaks and acts in terms of modern hegemonic masculinity.

Act II opens with Crow who is on the same stage. The stage direction of the scene describes Crow’s appearance and behavior as a competitor to Hoss:

*He looks just like Keith Richard. He wears high-heeled green rock and roll boots, tight greasy jeans, a tight yellow t-shirt, a green velvet coat, a shark tooth earring, a silver swastika hanging from his neck and a black eye-patch covering the left eye. He holds a short piece of silver chain in his hand and twirls it constantly, tossing it from hand to hand. He chews a stick of gum with violent chomps. He exudes violent arrogance and cruises the stage with true contempt. Sometimes he stops to examine the guns on the floor, or check out the knives and the dummy. Finally he winds up sitting in Hoss chair.*

Crow sits on Hoss’s chair which symbolizes the replacement of power, strength and authority. Before Hoss and Crow entangle any conflict, this action foreshadows that Hoss’s throne will be usurped by Crow.

Traditionally when a very powerful man wanted to fight or do a match with his opponent who was lower than him, he gave his opponent the opportunity and time to rest and restore his strength. At the end of Act I, Hoss acts the same way. He tells Cheyenne “He can take a swim, have a sauna and massage, some drinks, watch a movie, have a girl, dope, whatever he wants.
Tell him to relax. I’ll see him when I come to” (226). When they confront Hoss admits that he was really tired and that Crow “steal a lotta’ energy from a distance” (227). Crow declares “Only power forces weigh the points” in their match (229). Hoss tells Crow that he has not used a blade for over ten years. Then he “begins to switch into a kind of Cowboy-Western image” (230). He tells Crow that “I reckon you ain’t never even seen a knife. A pop like you. Up in Utah we’d use yer kind fer skunk bait and throw away the skunk” (230). Crow gets nervous and feels that he is losing the match. Hoss continues “We’d drag you through the street fer a nickel. Naw. Wouldn’t even waste the horse. Just break yer legs and leave ya’ fer dog meat” (231). Then he shifts to 1920s gangster style. Crow seems more confident that he has got Hoss to switch. Hoss turns to his own style. Crow states that “Sometimes the skin deceives. Shows a power ripple” (231). Crow continues “You smell loser, Leathers. . . . There’s no marker on the planet can out-kill me with no kinda’ weapon or machine. You’d die with the flag still in the air. . . . I’m gonna leave you paralyzed alive. Amputated from the neck down” (234). REF tests his whistle. “Hoss and Crow begin to move to the music, not really dancing but feeling the power in their movements through the music. They each pick up microphones. They begin their assaults just talking the words in rhythmic patterns” (234).

The fight between Crow and Hoss begins. The referee keeps giving points to Crow and announces that the match is over. Crow is the winner. Hoss tells “I ain’t even started to make my move yet! Then enraged he shoots the referee. “REF falls dead” (241). “Now Hoss is truly an outcast: he has become a Gypsy outlaw, creature cast out from the ring of social convention. . . . Feeling his oats as the new leader, Crow demands all of Hoss’s turf in exchange for lessons on how Hoss must behave as a Gypsy” (Tucker 92). Crow accepts “All right. The turf’s yours. The whole shot. Now show me how to be a man” (243). Crow teaches Hoss to be a man in a funny way. He teaches Hoss how to use his eyes like a weapon, try out his walk, tighten his ass, talk to his blood, breathe deep and slow, and empty his head. After that Hoss turns into a little boy which suggests physical weakness. Before this scene in Round Two it was said that Hoss grew older which suggested the dysfunctional health. Both kinds of transformations assist the idea of losing dominant position as hegemonic masculine. Becoming aware that he has lost his honor, authority and a way of life that is important to him, “Hoss withdraws a pistol, puts the barrel in his mouth, and pulls the trigger, joining the
ranks of James Dean, Duane Allman, and Jackson Pollock (heroes of Hoss and also of Shepard)” (Wade 57). The body organ Hoss chooses to shoot at has symbolic implication. Since Hoss and Crow are considered to be “mouthers--rock singers, poet-commentators of their time--the choice of place for the gunshot is apt. Before he dies, Hoss tells Crow that Crow can exist only because he has never seen himself objectively, from the ‘outside’. Once Crow allows that virtue of insight, he will be doomed, for he will know how pitifully meager a life he has led” (Tucker 92).

Hoss’s suicide may be a heroic act but Crow does not give him tragic dignity. Crow tells his crew to clean up the place. He wants no part of Hoss lying around. Crow also takes Becky for himself and she “joins Crow’s camp without complaint or lamentation” (Tucker 92).

Shepard’s rejection of the rock and tinsel... is a rejection of materialist society in pursuit of immediate gratification. Such a society consumes its artists, who are agents for the social gratification, and then discards them when the artistic power grows weak. The society is not merely a capitalist world, or one located in the conference offices of the familiar cigar-smoking mogul, but one inhabited by money grubbers, hangers-on, addicted sports fans, and lonely hyped-up drifters. (Tucker 93)

The last word is Crow’s, the victor: “didn’t answer to no name but loser. All that power goin’ backwards... Now the power shifts and sits until a bigger wind blows” (250). Crow’s last words reveals the fact that hegemonic masculinity is subject to change. He himself has to wait for someone else more powerful than him to come with a new face of hegemonic masculinity and conquer him through new style and creed.

The process of shaping and moulding is important because we live in an age of mass communication, where the way we represent things becomes much more significant (Eaglestone 117). Louis Althusser (1918-1990) argues that art makes us see, in a distanced way, the ideology from which it is born, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes. According to Althusser, “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Szeman and Kaposy 213). A dominant system of ideology is normally
projected by the ruling class as the common-sense view of things and is accepted by the other classes. Thus, the interests of the dominant class are secured. But art or literature achieves a fictional distance, or retreat from the ideology from which it is born and thus transcends the ideology of the creator. Like the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1934), who makes a distinction between rule and hegemony, Althusser makes a similar distinction between power and control. Hegemony is related to the world-view or class-outlook of the created culture of the dominant class and the resulting ideology which makes everybody feel that all of us are freely choosing what is actually imposed on us; this is a way of manufacturing consensus through immobile forms of social control such as media, the educational system, religious institutions, art and literature that mould our ideas and attitudes; whereas rule and power are directly repressive, structures like the army, the police, the prisons, the law courts are part of the State machinery. This distinction in Gramsci and Althusser accounts structures in a society whereby the power structure is maintained. Capitalism is sustained only through the trick that makes us feel that we are freely choosing what is imposed on us without any freedom of choice. Althusser’s complex formulation regards literary texts and textual processes as complex forms and declares that in order to say anything, there are things which must not be said. The literary critic, like a psychoanalyst, explores the text to find out what is suppressed/unspoken/unwritten. *The Tooth of Crime* reveals how hegemonic masculinity as ideology is shaped and constructed by ISAs. ISAs include organizations that create systems of ideas and values such as educational systems, religious institutions, legal systems, politics, arts, and media. It is useful to find “how masculinity is constructed by various programmes in various media and then ‘sold’ to viewers. It is because masculinity is so unstable as a concept in social actuality that it has to be constructed and reconstructed repeatedly in the mass media” (MacKinnon 33-34).

The way we think about gender and so many other issues is both “reflected in and produced by the images that surround us in our culture. Popular conceptions are vitally concerned with popular culture” (MacKinnon 23). Popular culture plays a large role in shaping and controlling our ideas about such things as identity and social hierarchies, and has a huge influence over our world-views. Studying the images and myths that inspire male identity within Shepard’s plays are of most importance. The influence of popular culture in Shepard’s plays is very noteworthy. There are some allusions to popular culture in his plays. “Film genres such as
the western and gangster film, music (particularly rock and roll and jazz), the drug
culture, and the world of advertising all influence and shape the lives and identities of his
heroes” (McDonough 42).

Shepard was experiencing the second identity alteration of his life when he created The Tooth of
Crime. The first identity shift happened for him when he left his family home in California as
Steve Rogers and went to New York calling himself Sam Shepard. After eight years of
concentrated creative writing, social fame, and consumption of drugs he moved to London to
begin a new life.

*The Tooth of Crime* is in some ways a “look back in horror” at the excesses of his life in
New York. You could say it’s about realizing that the things you wanted so desperately
when you were 22 seem unimportant, if not tacky, by the time you turn 30. In a larger
sense, the play penetrates an essential truth about the increasingly celebrity-fixated
media-culture that America has foisted on the world. Hoss thinks he got to the top
through sheer talent; his encounter with Crow reveals the sickening reality that a “Star” is
just another consumer commodity, a role American culture always wants someone to
play, and it scarcely matters who. (Shewey, Identity dance 291-92)

In the play there are some references to stars of western and gangster movies like John Wayne,
rock music idols such as Dylan, Jagger, Townshend, and consumption of drugs.

Hoss narrates a story of the time he was young and compares himself and two of his friends with
three stars of western movies: John Wayne, Robert Mitchum and Kirk Douglas. These movie
stars are always represented as the icons of dominant/hegemonic masculinity.

HOSS. We all went out to Bob’s Big Boy in Pasadena to cruise the chicks and this time
we got spotted by some jocks from our High School. . . . There were eight of ‘em, all
crew cut and hot for blood. This was the old days ya’ know. So they started in on Cruise
‘cause he was the skinniest. Smackin’ him around and pushin’ him into the car. . . .
Moose told ’em to ease off but they kept it up. . . . Girls and dates started gathering
Hoss himself is now a rock star. He terms himself “a trained slave” (20). He recognizes his status and complains: “I’m a fucking industry. I even affect the stocks and bonds” (225). Though The Tooth of Crime reiterates themes seen earlier in Melodrama Play and Mad Dog Blues, the work goes beyond Shepard’s recurrent indictment of the artist’s commodification and explores the complex matter of tradition and the individual talent.

The confrontation between Hoss and Crow consequently becomes not simply a contest of aesthetics but a battle between time frames and cultural identities. Crow is an urbanite, all style and sheen, engendered by the multimedia images of mass communications. Hoss refers to Crow as a ‘master adapter’ (249). Hoss to the contrary, voices allegiance to the past—he is born of the blacktop and the blues—and when he chides his adversary, “You could use a little cow flop on yer shoes, boy” (239), we note his connection with the land and his agrarian sensibility. Moreover, Hoss proves the American rocker, Crow the Brit (Hoss was performed by American playwright Michael Weller). Crow is described as a Keith Richards lookalike--foreign and exotic—with a swastika earring. (Wade 57)

In The Tooth of Crime, Hegemonic masculinity acts as an ideology and therefore is shaped and constructed through ISAs, institutions such as arts and media that produce ideologies and individuals internalize and act in accordance with. Since Shepard utilizes some allusions to Western and gangster film, rock and roll and jazz music, and the drug culture which
influence and shape male subjectivity, the influences of popular culture and media as an organization which creates systems of ideas and values are very noteworthy in *The Tooth of Crime*. 