Chapter 2

FORM AND TECHNIQUE IN THE PLAYS OF DAVID MAMET
AND SAM SHEPARD

In the manner any literary figure is cast in the spell of some mammoth litterateurs, ancient or modern, David Mamet and Sam Shepard have some all time masters to claim as their models in play writing. The most noteworthy influence is that of the drama veteran and iconoclast writer, Samuel Beckett, who worked out magic in plot, structure and techniques, broke grounds in theatre, and took both European and American audiences by storm. Substantial awareness derived from him and his inheritors in the west; these two dramatists have adopted a method assimilating the conventional and the modern and adapting them conducive to their disposition and the demand of the times. This entails a detailed analysis of the formative influences of these literary giants.

Literary Masters and Tradition inherited by Mamet and Shepard

David Mamet imbibed the tradition of the absurdist and avant-garde schools of playwriting, as those were the ones that prevailed in the years of his pioneering in the field. He, who began his career in the theatre by acting and directing and teaching drama, later started writing plays to illustrate his points he taught to his students. It necessitated that money should be raised, as funds were few, to pay royalties for the theatre company, he started writing plays with monetary aims and also by being immensely influenced by
the works of Lanford Wilson. In spite of that, Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* was the biggest influence for the whole community of playwrights of the age, Mamet admits. Minimalism was the fashion of the day, emulating Beckett and others. Minimal plot, characters and disjointed action were customary in the most famous of dramatists like Pinter, Albee, Miller and others. Mamet’s scathing criticism of the contemporary American situation and the white males “going nuts” as the American Dream myth was failing them, was a fond theme addressed by his forerunners like O’Neill, Miller, Pinter and other writers of his time in the theatre front. By adopting a novel style and a tonality of language that was quite unknown until then in the theatre circles, Mamet stood apart from his peers and entranced the theatre-goers since he staged his successful production of his double bill *Duck Variations and Sexual Perversity in Chicago* in 1971.

Pinter and Beckett taught him a style in which the dramatic action is dynamic that stands between the traditional dramatic action and the audience’s perception to create, almost in a cinematic way, a third reality. There is randomness that impels the human mind to deduce order out of it and the plays meaning is derived by the audience’s sense of order, of images, events and the like. Christopher Bigsby observes, “Mamet’s dramatic metaphors work by accretion, a slow intensifying of meaning. Action is character; action is also a language whose rhythms, tonalities, intensities and silences generate and reveal crucial anxieties” (13-14). Nevertheless the necessity of forwarding the plot is not subjugated by the importance of employing forceful, energetic and rhythmic language. According to Mamet, “Rhythm and action are the same” and “in the theatre, if you have
to use any narration, you're not doing your job,” as he said to Bigsby in an interview cited in David Mamet (14).

Mamet, unlike Miller does not hope to bring about drastic changes in the social conditions. He believes with Stanislavski, whose theories taught Mamet much about drama and performance that “the purpose of the theatre [...] is to bring to the stage the life of the soul. That may or may not make people more in touch with what’s happening around them and may or may not make them better citizens,” he said in an interview to David Savran (136). He agrees with Stanislavski's concept that there are two kinds of plays: those that leave an immediate and manifestly loud impression on you but “by the time you get home, you can’t remember the name of the play, you can’t remember what the play was about” and another category of plays “that are perhaps upsetting or intricate or unusual, that you leave unsure, but which you think about perhaps the next day, and perhaps for a week, and perhaps for the rest of your life” (Three Uses of the Knife, 21). Mamet had obviously been striving to adhere to the second type of plays. And under Sanford Meisner in New York he learned at the Neighborhood Playhouse the idea of through-line, of cause-and-effect motivation, filtered through Stanislavski and Boleslavsky. He loved to read Thackeray and Orwell who wrote about people who were embarrassed about the lack of money and American Literature as a whole were about business, the very foundation of American life. Mamet has no political agenda to manipulate the audience to his side or reform them. He is just presenting the sorry state of affairs in America, a culture that has fallen apart and theatre, he believes is part of the body politic of American civilisation. This he portrayed in his plays with only a few
characters and a bare stage and disjointed action and in tune to the post-modern
techniques adopted by Shepard also that varied from time to time and even from play to
play.

The dismal background of Mamet’s almost bare stages, like those of Sam
Shepard’s, remained correlative to the bleak and inescapable situations in which the
characters find themselves entrapped. In American Buffalo, it is the dreary interior of the
junk shop that symbolically evokes the dilapidated state of American civilisation. The
resale-shop is darkened, as it is evening in the final act, implying the menacing darkness
of the future and the tumultuous relationships developed towards the end, which has been
shown as emerging even in the first half, due to the distrust and disagreement between
them. The seedy Chinese restaurants and the pillaged real-estate office in Glengarry carry
suggestions of the topsy-turvy condition of American capitalistic business. The
disintegrated and hollowed state of the film business of Hollywood is implied in the
meagre set of the office of the production manager in Speed-the-Plow, with only scant
things such as boxes, painting materials and a telephone.

Mamet’s plays are also characterised by minimal plot in the Pinteresque fashion.
The story part has no evolution in the manner of the traditional play. The play ends
almost where it begins as far as Buffalo is concerned, in the junk-shop; the characters
engaged in incessant talking, about a project they never have the capability to materialize,
with no development of plot or character. For them talking by itself forms the action,
nothing other than their violent speeches and acts borne out of desperation and a sense of
inadequacy, takes place in the course of action. There remains only a vague hope of
reconciliation in the end, the future is still bleak and blurred, as they have to return yet again to the fetid state of affairs in the debris-ridden shop after they take the injured Bob to the hospital. Once again the whole action of another customer coming to deceive them, as they think has happened to them, and yet another heist to be planned to fill their life of emptiness, may result, for they have no other meaningful or glorious action to perform. Thus linear development of plot is lacking in this play; the motion is eternally cyclical or circular. In Glengarry also the beleaguered salesmen end up again in the persistent struggle for prospective leads, for yet another sales-contest is on, the salesmen set out to ensnare fresh victims or ‘marks,’ they find themselves all over again in the seedy Chinese restaurant. Bobby Gould and Charlie Fox in Speed-the-Plow were able to shake off from the dreadful grip of the incestuous charms of the secretary, but are destined to confront innumerable threats of the sort, time and again, in the decadent film field, as they sit waiting for better prospects and the realization of the film they have decided to produce with their names over the title.

The idea of a dismally bare stage and non-linear plot also characterises many of Shepard’s plays, the early ones in particular. But he lost faith in the absurdist conception of minimal characters and minimal plot he had once experimented with. He had as well tried the way of achieving coherence by blending together juxtaposing images and developing a collage like structure, converging the symbols at the end, interspersed with short cinematic cuts and development of the existentialist idea by improvisational methods. Minimalism was then a necessity, to cut down production charges in the Off-Off Broadway scene. Characters took the stage by their physicality and fast, energetic
and rhythmic speeches that predominantly expressed Shepard’s inimitable passion for jazz at first and rock in the later plays. These techniques were primarily in tune with the **avant-garde** method of staging plays. Improvisational methods did not last for long; for the playwright was later attracted to the structure of conventional plays, the traditional mode of unravelling the story, followed by O’Neill and others. And psychological probing in an almost naturalistic setting became a recurrent mode in his plays. He opted to deal with familial problems mostly incorporating autobiographical elements, elaborating the disintegrating ties within the walls of one’s home and the inescapability from one’s roots and parentage. But he had not given away with the disjointed action and the dismal atmospheres of his plays and the blending of incoherent images to create a topsy-turvy world as in other post-modern plays. Thus with *Curse of the Starving Class* he began to espouse a new tradition of playwriting, plays with three acts and with a lot of psychological penetrating into the essence of the character. The characters seldom change places to improve life, better their innate traits or achieve spiritual solace out of regeneration or they are bogged down by an inescapable sense of doom.

Marrying a naturalistic tradition and adopting a conventional pattern of play structure, Shepard began to utilise the play space for his most surrealistic tendencies from *Curse* onwards. By virtue of being an experimentalist, he changed techniques from one play to another. As an instance the divided stage technique is used in *A Lie* and *Simpatico* but not in *Buried Child*. Music hits the score fully in *A Lie* but moderately in other plays. The apparently ‘realist’ form was only superficial for the characters are found playing out a nightmarish life of their wildest dreams. Things happen in the
manner they shun and dread in a hopeless way. In Buried Child the bare and dismal stage by itself becomes the metaphor of their degenerate and hopeless lives. Old and worn out stage properties and a staircase that shows no landing as if it takes us to the infinity, all add to the dreariness intended. But as against some of the plays he wrote in the earlier period Shepard is now found to deploy more number of characters on the stage, but the situation examined in each play is seldom existentially the better. Shepard increases this number as he was found to work with a sprawling crew for his next musical and thrilling play A Lie of the Mind, written in the next phase of his advancing career. Shepard had already been employing post-modern techniques of disjointed speech, pastiche, and destabilisation in his plays.

A Lie concerns how a marriage between a young woman and a man becomes dissolute by male violence and how their families react to the whole crisis. Hung on a slender plot Shepard creates almost a dream like aura dispensing with to demarcate between fantasy and subjective expressionism. This is further promoted by the employment of a divided platform system, a stage set at multiple levels to highlight the yawning distances between people and places and to represent various actions simultaneously. He has also forsaken the super-realistic trends of the immediately preceding plays and insisted on the employment of minimum of furniture and other simple and stark devices as stage property, just to suggest “a sense of realism.” But this superficial clothing of realism is subverted by the use of almost filmic musical score that militates against the conventions of stage naturalism. Furthermore the insistently dreamlike use of stage lighting also underscores the play’s surrealistic tendencies. The
cocooned life of each of the characters in Beth’s family is symptomatic of the fragmentation and alienation they suffer even though they are placed in a place far away from the urban locale, cradled in the mountains.

_Simpatico_ is not in the least a play of divisions and polarities in relationships, but this time he takes the characters outside blood ties. Closely following the divided stage system as observed in _A Lie_ and arranging stage properties in a similar bleak and bare fashion, Shepard once again relies on the audience imagination to unveil the identity crisis and the dissolute situation they are held up in. Vinnie’s apartment in the first act is not only in disarray but also “very sparse,” but Carter’s Kentucky mansion is as well represented by a “very simple set,” although it has “the impression of wealth.” Windows or doors open out not into a dreamy and beautiful landscape but into stark and foreboding blackness leaving no hope of a bright life beyond the premises of the dismal stage.

Minimalism in plot is not merely a feature of his early plays for he did not give up the trend even in the latest phase of his career. With a bare plot line he depicts a succession of stage action all hung on to the peg of the prominent motif, deriving an apparently coherent structure. But things are left open-ended in most plays, questions unanswered and mysteries unresolved. Thus Shepard shows a clearly modernistic tendency occasionally evolving a mixed style by espousing a middle way. Thus he is a successor of the modernist August Strindberg and also the more traditional Eugene O’Neill.

If in _Buried Child_ it is all about one’s incapability to shred off one’s roots and the disoriented life due to the over implication of the blood, Shepard has nothing more to
develop in his plot-line except an assertion of the cyclical repetition of crime, punishment and retribution. At the end of the play the unholy union of the decayed body of the baby carried by its father, Tilden the son to its mother, Halie happens as the remnants of their incest of the past is carried to eternity. This is only to imply a repetition of the whole process that took place in their guilty past. Shepard achieves a profundity of the plot by hoarding a number of images and metaphors and failing to resolve the mysteries examined. A Lie has also a circular plot development and flat characters that stand as victims of a violent and untoward familial situation. The only character to evolve into a regenerated life and existence is Beth who ironically achieves this state by the trauma she overcame, the brain damage caused by her husband. She is relieved of her past, as her memory is affected and derives a rejuvenated life choosing to marry Frankie her husband’s brother who is the sanest character on stage, one who is able to differentiate between good and bad. Women characters at least show their power of will to say farewell to their repression due to their married and male-bonded lives.

Simpatico too gives an impression of an undeveloped plot; the characters are trapped in a nothing-to-achieve situation, unless one changes according to one’s will, provided he remembers all that happened in the past. A combination of the overpowering guilt, the culpability to sins and impending doom is again Shepard’s major concern. Characters wander very near to this fatality but there are faint flickering of hope and evolution. Thus Simms has stood his stead in spite of the scandal and continues to be so, independent and thriving in his profession, facing yet another trial of the kind, being tantalised to retrieve his past reputation. Vinnie evolves from his deprecate state into a
professional detective in his effort to place himself in an undisputed status. The story is not unfurled beyond this situation of the modern urban American. But within this bare plot line, Shepard attempts a deep psychological probing, by his “gift for the spare, edgy speech that combines the menacing and the comic,” quoting The Daily Telegraph (Simpatico, back cover).

If David Mamet the severe critic was preoccupied by the diminishing ethical standards of a marginal group, and is not surprisingly influenced by the socio-economist, Veblen, his contemporary Sam Shepard turned his interest to a spiritualist, Gurdjieff for he was introspecting his own soul for confirmation. Shepard definitely has found solutions for both his spiritual and artistic interrogations from the great master, it is presumed. Both playwrights had a guiding force invested in them through their influences by the above-discussed great men. It becomes evident that outward form, themes and even characterisation of the plays have had a definitive sway by the ideas perpetuated by these renowned masters.

**Veblen and Mamet**

In a number of interviews, especially the one with Matthew C. Roudané in Studies in American Drama, (1986a) Mamet has acknowledged the influence of Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) as a source of his moral vision and his demonstration of how often his characters fall short of their potential. Veblen was an American sociologist, economist, satirist and sometime Chicagoan. He has also referred to Veblen as his source in a letter to Jack V. Barbera in June 6, 1980. This iconoclastic sociologist contributed a distinctive and lasting body of ideas, the idiom of which dissected the follies of American
life in a devastating yet hilarious fashion. Adopting Veblen’s ideas, Mamet also took upon himself an identical task, which credited him with such rich acclamations as “His achievements already stamp him as a major American playwright of his generation whose work has both the vividness and the power to cross national boundaries,” (Carroll 155).

David Mamet was illuminated with the idea of an ethical perversity existing at both ends of the urban economic spectrum form Veblen. He chose to emphasize and elaborate the central conceit he derived from Veblen, the relationship between the businessman and the lumpenproletariat. “There’s really no difference between the lumpenproletariat and stockbrokers or corporate lawyers who are the lackeys of business [though] [...] part of the American myth is that a difference exists, that at a certain point vicious behaviour becomes laudable,” Mamet has remarked in his explanation in New York Times (15 January, 1978). Mamet strives to substantiate the surfacing of Veblen’s “predatory phase of life” when aggression has become a norm and “Booty, trophies of the chase or of the raid, come to be prized as evidence of preeminent force.” Veblen’s suggestion that a distortion of language characterizes such a predatory society is applicable to Mamet’s use of language. Veblen theorises that in such a culture the word ‘honourable’ implies the ‘assertion of superior force [...] formidable,’ while ‘worthy’ means ‘prepotent.’ To have a fuller understanding of Mamet’s American Buffalo, a reading of Veblen’s thoughts as depicted in his book Theory of the Leisure Class is desirable, says Jack V. Barbera (274).

Veblen had perceived that people aimed for pecuniary benefits and indulged in predatory actions in business ownership, forsaking the industrial and social interests of
production. Teach in Buffalo is the best example of a Veblen “lower-class delinquent.”

Veblen’s idea of emulation and the snob appeal of what is obsolete, applies to the characters of Buffalo, Don and Bob keen in collecting rare coins and savouring the things bought from the World Fair that happened in 1933 and “it ran for two years, and nad (I don’t know) all kinds of people every year they’re buying everything that they can lay their hands on”(18) according to Don.

Mamet has discussed his ideas learned from Veblen in his interview to Matthew C. Roudane’ (1986a) and accordingly he has engaged himself with the myth of American Dream as central to his moralistic and artistic (theatrical) vision. As the American national culture is based on the very idea of strive and succeed, individuals consider that their fellows’ extremity is their opportunity. To gain something out of nothing is their basic philosophy. Towards this he travails and succeeds at the cost of someone else. “So one can only succeed at the cost of, the failure of another, which is a lot of my plays—American Buffalo and Glengarry Glen Ross--are about,” says Mamet (Roudane’, Studies 74). He also relates Veblen saying, sharp practice inevitably shades over to fraud and that man has no vested interest in behaving in an unethical manner, his innate sense of fair play is usually annulled by the foul play in which he himself become a victim of his fellow. Mamet has also acknowledged Veblen’s big influence on him in shaping his dramatic thoughts, quotes him saying, “a lot of business in this country is founded on the idea that if you don’t exploit the possible opportunity, not only are you being silly, but in many cases you’re being negligent. even legally negligent” (Roudane’. Studies 75).
Hence it seems appropriate that in Mamet’s “Business Trilogies”—American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross, and Speed-the-Plow are peopled with Americans incessantly in a pursuit of that dream life of wealth and leisure and are legitimatised in their words and actions. They all undertake to perform such criminal or unlawful enterprises in the guise of doing business. American capitalism provides the incentives and the chances that motivate the petty crooks in Buffalo and the crooked salesmen of Glengarry. Such ‘delinquents,’ to quote Veblen who has named such crooks, find themselves among the detritus of disposables of modern life, at the bottom rung of the ladder of success. They constitute the essential ‘have-nots’ who are susceptible to the desire for rank and status normally achieved by tireless work, deserving success and rightful wealth. They function on the same principles as of the successful businessmen, mitigating predatory action. Crime is equivalent to business in Buffalo, business is equivalent to crime in Glengarry and spiritual corruption and venality equals film business in Plow. If the proposed heist is business in disguise in Buffalo, the salesmen think it proper to rip open their boss’s office for successful business in Glengarry. On the other hand, in Hollywood business one can spiritually oust a comrade when it comes to money making in the tinsel town. Taking advantage of others and indulging in selfish activities is not a crime, is commendable in a society constituting Veblen’s kind of individual of the Leisure class.

If Mamet has learned ideas about moral decay and ethical perversity from Veblen, thematically employed them in his plays, Shepard was on the hunt for spiritual solace that is lacking in him as represented in his protagonists. Failure of the American
Dream myth as embodied in the morally base and disoriented characters and also deprecate, sordid situations led him nowhere. His bewailing the loss of the distinct American traits of individualism has the same connotations as Mamet’s sharp practice of denouncing the absence of moral scruples in the characters. The great philosopher and spiritualist G.I. Gurdjieff seemed to provide an answer to Sam Shepard.

Gurdjieff and Sam Shepard

G.I. Gurdjieff was a spiritualist who passed a lifetime endeavouring to enlighten his students with a system of esoteric knowledge. Gurdjieff’s movement has had a considerable impact on the twentieth century religious scene in America. Born in an area between Greece and the Caspian Sea in the late 1860s or early 1870s, he arrived in Moscow only at the beginning of the First World War. Nothing about his first forty years is known from his philosophically instructive biography, Meetings with Remarkable Men (1963). His system of ideas and values was so complex and interconnected that it is difficult to select a single aspect or idea as the basic one. His view was that “the study of psychology begins with the study of oneself”. Self-study meant not the cloistering of oneself, or quiet contemplation, it was the throwing of oneself into tireless activities, unexpected and strenuous ones. As an instance, one of the activities pursued at the institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fountainbleau, south of Paris, was the study of Gurdjieff’s original choreographed dances, called “Sacred Gymnastics” in Russia and “Movements” after he arrived in France. In 1924 he toured New York and Chicago and made considerable following there. He made frequent future visits to
America while in France. Gurdjieff taught that life was to be lived in the present moment, only the ideas, music and sacred gymnastics were important.

In the mid-1950s the Gurdjieff foundation of New York was formally established under the guidance of senior American and European pupils of Ouspensky, Gurdjieff and other European followers. There were Gurdjieff centres in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Jeanne de Salzmann gave structure and direction to Gurdjieff centres worldwide. She conceived of and initiated work on a feature film, Meetings with Remarkable Men, with director Peter Brook, which was released in 1978, based on Gurdjieff's autobiography. The film gave an impression of the energy of Gurdjieff's spiritual quest. It was with Peter Brook that Shepard made his acquaintance in 1973 and was introduced into the Gurdjieff movement that changed his life and gave him a better understanding of his medium of playwriting.

Gurdjieff was considered as a genius maker of theatre. Shepard joined a Gurdjieff study group and acquired a greater awareness, self-confidence and a deeper understanding of human nature. Brook had advised him to maintain a profound understanding of characters. It was Gurdjieff's writings that instilled in him awareness about the multiplicity of identities in a single person. Gurdjieff's idea as professed in his books Meetings with Remarkable Men is in close semblance with Open Theatre's transformation exercises: "We think if a man is called Ivan he is always Ivan. Nothing of the kind. Now he is Ivan, in another minute he is Peter, and a minute later he is Nicholas [...] You will be astonished when you realise what a multitude of these Ivans and
Nicolases live in one man. If you learn to observe them, there is no need to go to a cinema."

The characters of his early plays were not realistically drawn psychologically standardized individuals introduced by occupation, appearance and attitudes in half-page descriptions like the people in plays by Shaw and O'Neill. Fluidity was the soul of characterisation; characters changed faces and identities according to their fancy, survival instinct or chemical inspiration. They set themselves free from the shackles of their past life to lead a life of their dreams appeasing to their soul full. In the initial stages of playwriting Shepard thought it useless or outmoded to be interested in character. After his meeting with the renowned stage director Brook, he became impressed by his ideas and work, which had a lasting influence on him. It was then that he realised (in 1973) when he turned thirty "that underneath the variety of images he had been playing out in his life and work—cowboy, rock-star, musician, playwright, father, lover—was something constant, steady, possibly old as the hills, something that defines identity, character. If only he could figure out what it was" (Shewey 153-54).

Shepard found a strong basis in Brook's translation of Gurdjieff's worldview into theatrical terms. It gave Shepard a marked affirmation and solace, for he had been for a lifetime lamenting the fragmented, disoriented nature of humanity. "Gurdjieff himself had plunged into his inner chaos. calling on mankind to seek the truth and then live by it as fully and as consciously as possible. The truth lay in the development of consciousness of self and of others and acceptance of all aspects of a human being" (Oumano 100).
Shepard perceived the teachings and accepted as that of his own master and looked upon Brook as his spiritual anchor and alter ego.

Henry Sinclair (Lord Pentland) a Scotsman and Christ College graduate was the President of the New York and California Gurdjieff Foundations from its beginning to his death in 1984. Pentland had been an Ouspensky pupil in England prior to the Second World War and immigrated to America with Ouspensky in 1940. Pentland met Gurdjieff only in the last two years of Gurdjieff’s life. Recognizing Pentland’s singular qualities, Gurdjieff, facilitated his coming to have a position of authority among Gurdjieff’s pupils in New York. In 1984 Shepard attended Pentland’s funeral, which was an experience of intense grief for him. It is not explicit how far Shepard was influenced by Gurdjieff’s teachings. But it is assumed that Shepard’s way of shunning publicity and his love for a private personal life emerged out of his being a committed student of Gurdjieff. Devout disciples of Gurdjieff never spoke about their master and his work publicly. Gurdjieff’s esoteric teachings cannot be reduced to doctrine or dogma. As his disciple Claudio Naranjo reveals that Gurdjieff “took it upon himself to show the western world that mankind is asleep, that there are higher levels of being, and that there are somewhere people who know” (Shewey 188). Shepard dedicated his play, A Lie of the Mind (1985) to the memory of Lord Pentland.

In the Sixties Sam Shepard had felt the pulse of the American youth to be thumping with Rock n’ roll. Thus he began to write a series of plays beginning with Melodrama Play (1967) and ending with The Tooth of Crime (1972). An examination of those plays along with some other reveals Shepard’s fatalistic attitude (conscious or
unconscious) toward politics. These plays basically give us the idea that it is meaningless to try to change the world because it tends to go on as usual (as in Unseen Hand) or destroy on its own (as in Forensic and Navigators and Operation Sidewinder). The outcome will be the same, irrespective of the efforts made by any political or religious group or of any age group. The light undoubtedly must come from one’s inner being for which one must toil much. This idea definitely comes from the ideas propagated by Gurdjieff’s teachings, who preached a quest for self knowledge through distinguishing the “real” (inner) world from the “illusory” (outside) world, the values of which are drawn in by the humans unquestioningly. Shepard firmly believed in the futility of overt political activity and was readily attracted by Gurdjieff’s teachings. As he puts it in a Village Voice interview, “If the experience of being confronted by a theatre event brings some shock to your reality, brings some kind of new touch with yourself—then it’s important,” and continues, “But if you leave the theatre with a lot of theories about how to approach the world...well that just lasts for a while” (Shewey 67-68). Thus most of Shepard’s characters like Vince in Buried Child, Jake in A Lie and Vinnie in Simpatico are engaged in a sort of quest for roots or ties which they hope would lead them to appeasement of the soul which persistently evaded them in the past. They look ahead to achieve this spiritual solace by tireless efforts.

Treatment of Women in the plays of David Mamet and Sam Shepard

Both David Mamet and Sam Shepard have been criticized for creating a macho world where women are despised as mere sexual objects, things to be desired by men. They are persistently treated with contempt and hatred in a world where men are the
deciding force and energy centres but men are the ones who are destined to face the proverbial abyss. Women in Shepard are generally wives, girlfriends, mothers or some sort of servile worker, maid, secretary and the like. By portraying a male-chauvinistic milieu, both of these playwrights seldom seem to have any apparent interest in the relations of men and women, preferring instead to delineate a pre-eminently masculine world. But the men they create, are in actuality, ineffectual, fearful and emotionally immature. They seldom show their strength will or character but are allowed to dominate in spite of their incompetence, because it is their due as men. This marginalisation of women characters can be viewed as part of the adopted form of such plays with modernistic trends. Mamet’s plays in a great number are astonishingly and excessively all-male plays. 4H Club, The Unseen Hand, The Holy Ghostly, Killer’s Head and Cowboys are the plays Shepard has written completely excluding women. Including American Buffalo and Glengarry Glen Ross Mamet has authored six plays with exclusively male milieu.

Shepard in particular, a cultural icon of his time, is not simply traditional in his attitude to women, but blatantly oppressive. In his plays the lyrical solo, an expression of ones internal psychological pressures, are reserved for men only. Vince and Dodge in Buried Child (129, 130) and Weston and Wesley in Curse of the Starving Class (182, 137) are privileged for such rhetorical speeches. “The voice—of consciousness, of the emotions, of reason, of triumph and of failure too are finally of America—is a man’s voice,” says Bonnie Marranca (31). They are cast out of the centre to do menial jobs and
frequently abused. They are treated subservient to men and their potential for growth and change restricted. They have been described as the root of evil and malice.

In *Buried Child* Halie the central mother figure is a naïve character engrossed in either flirting with men or pampering her sons. She is described in the play as the originator of the primal sin in the family that inevitably caused the doom of spiritual devastation for all the members of the family. She has caused ruin not only to her husband but also to her sons, Tilden and Bradley. She persists in her old age in her entertaining illicit relations to the extent of seducing even a priest, Father Dewis belonging to her neighbourhood. But Shelly, Vince’s girlfriend remains an exception, fighting through the disharmony that has invaded the family. She overcomes the disquietude that overrides the house and finally escapes after performing a symbolic castration of the menacing male figure, Bradley by hiding his prosthetics. Ironically enough she does not escape the shame of having been a victim to the scatology and verbal sexual abuse of Dodge at first and later the physical sexual abuse, a symbolic attempt at rape by both Tilden and Bradley. Dodge had insulted her by asking her the part of the country she originally came from and commenting about the country, “They’re stupid. Do you know why they are stupid? ... Because they are full of smart-asses. That’s why” (90). This was soon after he had perversely complemented her for her beauty and saying, “She’s a smart-ass too” (89). Tilden by stroking her rabbit coat shows a sexual fascination for her and later Bradley forces his hands into her mouth, acts that carry connotations of molests. She is all the more physically assaulted by Vince when he grabs her trying to prevent her leaving the house.
In *A Lie of the Mind* powerless mother figures and disabled daughters rule the stage: victims of abuse, contempt and fated to be estranged from men. But it is argued that in this play Shepard has given much more prominence to women than in many of the earlier plays as the females exhibit more courage and intelligent standing. Relief is provided as one mother, Lorraine, sheds her belongings and reminiscences of her past tumultuous life with her husband and sons and quits the country to build a new life free of cares and concerns. Her daughter, Sally too who was originally caught in the pretensions of her brother to be his accomplice to help him escape from his mother's custody, later wields courage to renounce all such fake ties and promises to stand as a support for her mother. They render the relics of their past abhor-able life, their house and everything in it, into ashes and move out to face life heroically. On the other side of the stage, in Montana, Meg instinctively states that she could get along by herself even if her husband, Baylor moved out completely. Baylor has been frequently deserting her to suit his wishes, going out and remaining outdoors just to fulfil his desire for hunting. Beth also enters a new phase of life when she meets Frankie a gentle and loving man, a man with diametrically opposite traits to Jake, Beth's husband and a wife-beater. Thanks to her new state of mind, a rejuvenated soul, she has risen from the ashes of her past denigrated married life and is like a phoenix trying to set up a liberated life. In spite of the regenerations achieved by these women, they would never be able to put out of their minds the bitterness and unpleasant thoughts of their chaotic histories of the bygone days. *Simpatico* also has to its credit the stories of (two onstage and an offstage) women characters treated as despicable and secondary. Both the onstage women are represented
as lustful women, lust for money in essence. They are engaged in chasing and trapping financially sound and influential men who can provide them financial security. Rosie is characterised by her blind servility for her adulterous husband, Carter. “He’s been carrying on behind my back since day one,” (96) she alleges. She too is never free of such disloyalty; she has ignominiously jilted her first husband in Carter’s favour. She is undoubtedly justified in doing so for Vinnie’s house is short of all the amenities of an affluent life. Another woman character, Cecilia is on the other hand doggedly obligated to her male counterparts like Vinnie, Carter and Simms. She is after her own pleasures and finally succumbs to the will of the most resourceful man on stage, a successful and enterprising man, Simms alias Ryan Ames, assenting to his invitation to join him on a trip to the Derby, in the next season of horseracing. The offstage woman is a seedy prostitute hired to defame Simms. Women are altogether described as second rate, less intelligent and predominantly mean and self-interested in their motives.

David Mamet presents a perceptibly masculine world in the sense he portrays a world of macho-attitudinising where women are strangely absent in their lives but serve to be the subjects of their scatological dialogues and perverse demeanours. In their existential anguish they have more complaints about women than about other men. This has become so as the essence of family, society, community, love, friendship and blood relation have all been drained out in their scrambling towards a capitalistic world. As Guido Almansi corroborates, “Mamet is the poet and critic, chronicler and parodist, of the stag party and of all social occasions and situations precluding women. His best plays are immune from any female contamination; the existence of women only filters through
the preconceived ideas of the opposite sex” (191). They accuse women as being the cause of their failures as men are confronted with women as Teach does in Buffalo. It seems that these men are marked for their pathetic “impotence” as Bigsby (76) puts it. “Mamet’s businessmen are deeply misogynistic and deeply homophobic,” says Hersh Zeifman (Kane, Casebook 126). Men move in pairs, as is the case with Don and Bob in Buffalo, Moss and Aaronow in Glengarry and Gould and Fox in Speed-the-Plow. Women are ruthlessly being referred to as “cunts,” “broads,” “bitches,” “chicks,” “whores” and the like. Feminine traits are derided and considered detrimental to business proceedings and so they are relegated to the background, it is plainly obvious.

Ruthie and Grace in American Buffalo are two offstage characters who are vehemently abused by Teach for the simple reason that they have been engaged in a friendly game of dice and because Ruthie has won in the poker and earned two hundred dollars. Teach becomes furious at the very thought of it and says, “She is a mooch and she is a locksmith and she plays like a woman” (14). The word “woman” is explicitly used as a derogatory and slandering term and not to speak of “mooch” and “locksmith” They have also met at breakfast that day at the riverside parlour and shared tea. Somehow Teach feels that he has been insulted at table, as they paid less heed to his friendly gestures including his offer to pay. However Teach ignores the fact that Ruthie and Grace were engaged in some personal talk. He feels disgraced and hence his torrent of “Fuckin’ Ruthie” (9) repeated six times as he makes his first entry revealing his neurotic sensibility. The term “fuck” has a sexually violent connotation that Mamet’s characters use it frequently whenever they are bored, impatient or desolate. And about Grace too
Teach blurts out abusively for the simple reason that she is Ruthie's partner, "And always with that cunt [Grace] on her shoulder" (14). But Teach is particularly vindictive of Ruthie as he thinks that she has cheated him in the poker the previous night securing two hundred dollars for her. His friend Fletcher also won the game winning four hundred dollars. But he is not so much accused as Ruthie. He arms himself with a whole lot of invectives and four-letter words, abusing women. He considers the transaction between friends a serious offence. Fletcher had reportedly cheated Ruthie, probably by a deal of pig iron, paying her less than what she demanded and deserved. But Don describes it as business. He states, "That's all business is...common sense, experience, talent." Then Bob says, "Like when he jewed Ruthie out that pig iron." But Don is with Fletcher defending, "That was his pig iron, Bob.... Yeah he bought it off her." In spite Ruthie is said to be "mad at him.... That he stole her pig iron." Don considers it business and asserts, "That's what business is" (6). Nevertheless his own sale of the coin to the coin dealer is supposedly considered part of swindling and hence his justification for the robbery of the same from the dealer's apartment. Thus it becomes evident that Ruthie being a woman deserves only to be cheated and abused and not to be given justice. Thus Ruthie and Grace are cast out as insignificant and marginal figures in the plot of the play. Don's life is free of a woman, as he has also no claim of a mother, girlfriend or a sister to speak of, and considers it appropriate to trust a buddy like Bob. The three male figures try in vain to set up an ersatz family so as to share their emotions and thoughts, which unfortunately bring them no consolation. As Hersh Zeifman says in "Phallus in Wonderland," "a dramatic world in which women are marginalized to the point of literal
exclusion provides *in itself* the most scathing indictment imaginable of the venality and corruption of American business" (Kane, *Casebook* 124).

*Glengarry Glen Ross*, which presents a grimmer world of the rude capitalistic society, offers a similar view of women. They never come on stage and are either eccentric or insignificant to speak of. The women mentioned are Lingk’s wife who gives strict instructions to stop the contract of buying land from Roma, the old man’s wife who is deceived into signing the contract with Levene, and Levene’s daughter whose name he uses to gain sympathy from Williamson to give him good leads. In spite of the absence of women on stage, the foul-mouthed salesmen constantly evoke their presence through their debased language in the course of laying bare their own effeminate or castrated states of having suffered defeat. The masculine position of “fuckin’” is what they desire to be in; they need to fuck the sales competition or the prospective leads. Unfortunately they are in the subordinate position of getting fucked, out of which they seem to have no escape. The repeated use of the term “fuck” seems to bring out their fears and trepidations of the worst, to taste defeat and take the feminine position of a “cunt” or a “secretary”, a job traditionally ascribed to women. Hence Levene’s abuse of Williamson in his rage, “you don’t have the balls” (76), and “you’re a *secretary*” (77) can be validated. He equates a man to his job and claims that success suits only a man. He asks Williamson, “Where did you learn your *trade*. You stupid fucking *cunt*. You *idiot*. Whoever told you you could work with *men*?” (96). He prefers to attribute masculine features to business and scorns Williamson for not possessing such traits.
Karen of *Speed the Plow* is a woman character capable of determining the course of the action as Mamet had begun to include women onstage. But she is described as one who uses her sexual charms to satisfy her aspirations for power and money equal to a witch it appears. She is qualified a “floozy” who acts as though “naïve,” and so stands between two stools. The moral victory of the men, Gould and Fox, is in denouncing her as a mere seductress and evolving themselves as suave and victorious in their trade. She is not simply a secretary but a “temp” who is reduced to a miniature figure having nothing to do except seducing men. She has nothing to preach but fake spiritualism confusing the men not for long, for they realize the danger of keeping her in office and they close the doors behind her. Levene’s (in *Glengarry*) conception of a man devoid of “balls” becoming a “secretary” becomes true in Mamet’s portrayal of this woman. The men, perceiving that she stands detrimental to their relationship as friends and business associates, discredits her as another whore like each one of them. It is posited that women have no role to play in the well-being and good of men, no possible contribution to make in their new ways of thinking and new ways of doing successful business. It appears that they are meant only to be trampled upon for the ultimate success of this male centred world that America always has been. Abuses are in the way of calling men effeminate as Fox rails at Gould knowing that his suggestion has been discarded, “you fool—your fucken’ sissy film—you squat to pee. You old woman…” (70). That David Mamet has himself excelled in his role of a woman abuser is palpable in his plays although he has defended the new position of women in the present day society in two of his essays in his collection *Some Freaks* (1989), in “Women” and “In the Company of Men.” But it
appears that such a method in form becomes indispensable in portraying a materially
oriented misogynistic society forcefully and credibly.

**Monologues and duologues in Mamet and Shepard**

David Mamet's plays are those that convey a sense of loss, a frenzied life seeking
the most unattainable aspects in the modern life. In order to suit his ends in a truthful
representation of the angst-ridden society, he has skilfully merged a form of speech in
which he incorporates both monologues and duologues as in the case of Shepard also. In
Mamet's plays, the anguish and desperation of these men at work are revealed in their
speeches as they are set forth in a rigorous, terse and rapid-fire, cross-purpose kind of
dialogue, in staccato phrases and stichomythia type speeches in the manner discussed in
detail in the chapter about language and style of this dissertation. The macho world is
dominated by speeches essentially masculine and coarse. They are mostly short
sentences, brief and frequently disjointed and often ungrammatical, denoting their seedy
and wayward life. Quite often single words, pregnant with meanings, serve the purpose of
a whole sentence. The prospective for a sense of contact lies more in the nuance,
implication, pause and silence and the will and intent of the rhythm of words than in the
text of dialogue and the choice of words. Mamet himself has stated in his essay
“Semantic Chickens” (typescript. 2-5 cited in Carroll 27) that we “don’t trust words. Our
anger is so great that we can only blurt and stammer.” Therefore these paranoiac
characters seldom resort to monologues, as they have nothing essential in their souls so as
to expose their inmost feelings. Long speeches occur only when they are emotionally
upset or excited and are outrageous about the current state of affairs, blasphemous and
invective-ridden speeches. They face an identity crisis where their apparent foes are mostly women and the corrupt system. The very stage is a metaphor for the contemporary state of affairs in America.

But Shepard's poetic and imagistic style is not merely confined to the stage pictures only. He fills the speeches with such kind of metaphors that an ordinary speech itself becomes rhetoric of immense intrinsic and extrinsic significance. He rarely makes use of the pornographic speech, except in his early plays, unless they are essential to reveal character. Moreover his men and women belong to the home, or the interior, places of seemingly ultimate security that the characters prefer to inhabit. Ironically it is such dreadful confinement that a character falls upon that creates within him the restlessness and fragmentation he seems to undergo. The characters are obviously engaged in an incessant search for the self as they feel that their very life and existence are inadequate to the appeasement of the soul. The search for the self, a pilgrimage into the heart and root of every single existence appears to be the key motif in all Shepard plays; his family plays in particular. Such a journey into the core of ones roots is the predominant echo of Vince's speech in the final act of *Buried Child*, where he narrates his spiritual journey to the past, where he becomes one with his fore-fathers. This monologue although made in the presence of other characters, has all the features of a monologue when Vince makes known his essential self as a vital member of the desiccated family and that an escape is unthinkable and even impossible. More about such speeches are also discussed in the chapter devoted to language and style. Negating ones roots is like nullifying ones very life; is the message conveyed through this
important speech of Vince. Just as Vince makes his violent entry into the stage, Dodge on one side is engaged in his rhetoric of a monologue pronouncing Vince as his true heir and the legitimate owner of the house, which is already in ruins. On a wider level the household is the degenerate America where the natives are crazy and anguished and it is as such bequeathed to the best paranoiac living, like the house inherited by Vince. Such imagistic and metaphorical speeches occur in his immediately preceding play *The Curse of the Starving Class* also. There it is the son, Wesley first and the father, Weston towards the end who make the symbolically exuberant speeches disclosing the tumult and violence of everyday life. Similar speeches lack in the forthcoming plays including *A Lie* and *Simpatico*. Instead the conversations are long and winding duologues that reveal the fundamental boredom and meaninglessness of their barren lives. Even such exasperating and repetitive speeches hardly enable them to reach out for one another, leaving nothing but the void created by a lack of communication of their inmost feelings that fail to convey. Each character seems to revel in his own fantastic premises of his dreams of becoming one with the parents, sibling, spouse, lover or fellow being, but their desires never bear fruit.

Shepard differs from Mamet, although they make much use of the traditional dramatic plot, in that his long speeches as the one of Halie in *Buried Child* and Wesley in *Curse* in the first Acts, carry in them defensive tones and social masks. They also open out the imaginative range and inmost thoughts of the characters. They are the intimate feelings and emotions churned out of their very souls. They tend to be lyrical and realistic carrying with them a hoard of images and symbols that signify their inadequate existence
and unappeased spirits. But Mamet's speech becomes individual and unmistakable, imitating the coarse dialogue of the Chicago street or the funny yet sarcastic and idiomatic speech of the workman. The dialogue is the chief dialectical principle in Mamet: the disjunctions between the overt meanings of the words and the implied meanings of the rhythms; between the ebullience of the speaker and the reactions of the listener; or between the speaker and his words and the silences he wants to cover and deny. These silences sometimes embody threat, at other times the possibility of contact.

Both playwrights are poetic in their own way. While Shepard has assimilated the rhythm of jazz or rock into his plays and speeches, Mamet has discovered a musical rhythm in the vernacular of Chicago, in their abuses and invectives used in places where only men meet. Mamet's characters use words in the manner that they have all been drained out of their meanings. Shepard allocates words rendering a symbolic dimension to express the futility of existence. He prefers to engage a separate musical band to support the play just as he administered in A Lie. Characters in the plays of both the playwrights simply use words so as to fill the void of non-communication and separation amongst them, as if they fear the stillness or indolence that devour their life altogether. They also substitute speech for action as they find themselves incompetent, inept and suffering relative to lack of initiative. Shepard's characters are also mostly attributed a guilty or gory past and words help them to attempt an invalidation of the memories but to no avail.
**Violence on stage**

As part of the form and technique, rather than as a theme, instituted by both playwrights, Mamet and Shepard seem to endorse violence on the stage incurring a lot of critical comments. They have married a way of presenting events in an apparently realistic garb with a portrayal of life perpetrating all kinds of violence. Verbal violence is the trend of the age and hence promotion of such kinds of speech in truthful representation of such debased lives is not a crime or an offence it seems. So Mamet and Shepard use language either fiercely or avidly to suit the various needs. Physical violence is also legitimatised in the plays written by both the playwrights.

Mamet makes Teach and Don in *Buffalo* perform actual violence on the stage amounting even to bloodshed, Teach injures Bob on the head in a session of inquisition, and Don strikes Teach back as retribution. Teach trashes the whole junk shop into ruins and symbolically presents a detritus-ridden violent America on the stage. Like an irate citizen, he carries a gun with him that Don even abhors, to ward off a “crazed lunatic,” forgetting the fact that his possession of the gun by itself promotes the idea of violence. *Glengarry* has to its credit violence and crime done between acts and the second Act does not directly show the act of robbery, accomplished by the desperate salesmen, aimed at securing the prospective contracts. The ransacked real-estate office represents the chaotic and frenzied state of business and consumerism in the world’s most powerful state. The secretary, Williamson stands huge terrorising the exhausted salesmen giving little chance for them to win or even to make their own bread, the definitive boss of the predatory
capitalistic set up. The beleaguered salesmen are thoroughly grilled to the extent of manhandling, for each one appears on the stage after the session, shattered and swearing to oneself to retaliate in spite of their incapability to do so. Violence is preached and performed in Speed-the-Plow in the way of physical assault as Fox hits Gould for double-crossing him by yielding to his temporary secretary’s will and he cries out, “I’ll fucken’ kill you right here in the office” (70). Furthermore the verbal violence implies the physical, be it in the case towards Gould or the woman character, Karen.

Shepard’s males are the ones who practise the most gruesome and violent acts. Dodge in Buried Child is guilty of the infant murder that serves as the central motif in the play. The patriarch is never free from the fear of the apocalypse that threatens to devour the whole family. Violence is performed on him in turn by his sons but in a symbolic manner intended to usurp his position as the head. Bradley’s shearing off Dodge’s hair and Tilden’s pilfering his bottle of whisky and taking away his cap are only instances of the kind. Sexual violence is that of Bradley and Tilden by turn, Shelly being the victim. The very plot of the play is propped on a history of violence and guilt, the consequences of which the characters are incessantly weighed down with. A Lie has a similar story line of domestic violence and trauma to tell. Beth the young wife of Jake is brain-damaged as she was victimised to her husband’s beating, wrongly accusing her of infidelity. She becomes the representative prey of the domestic violence that is on the rise in the United States in the last three to four decades irrespective of the laws administered out to protect women’s rights. She remains the vestige of the ultimate violence with bandages on her head, faltering her way into normal health, stammering and struggling for clear speech.
Brutality and hostility pervades in the relation between parents and offspring, between siblings, the worst between fathers and sons. The way in which Jake accomplishes his father’s death is blood freezing. They have behaved like wild animals vying with each other, blood thirsty and vengeful before the gruesome incident. The whole incident although narrated out by Sally is horrifyingly dramatic and bizarre, wrecking the audience’s nerves. Less aggressive acts like mother Lorraine attacking the sons and Jake’s brother Mike punishing Jake by making him move on all fours add to the belligerent atmosphere of the play. *Simpatico* is less violent in the sense it has no aggression enacted on the stage. But its characters are not free of the crime of aggressive scheming against friends and resorting to wily ways of shattering an intimate’s future.

In spite of the severe criticism faced by these prominent playwrights of America, these socially obliged luminaries cannot remain blind to the life of a violent society; aggression promoted both for national and familial causes and staging violence has become part of the technique to depict contemporary life truthfully. It is true that both have preached and practised domestic violence in their plays, as it is aggravating in the recent times in America as in many other parts of the world. For example, the FBI estimates a woman is battered in the United States every fifteen seconds and 31260 women were murdered by an intimate from 1976-1996 (*Shepard’s Theatre of Change*, Net). Shepard was evidently influenced by the Greek tragedy that he is keen to limit certain gory incidents outside the play space as he does in *Buried Child*. Mamet sheds blood in *American Buffalo* but restraints it in the succeeding plays. Although Mamet and Shepard have no solutions to offer or reveal their clear stance through the plays, they
seem to open the public eye towards a degenerate civilisation by waking their slumbering conscience. Cautioning the spiritually shut beings in a godless universe of the grave consequences is the focal point they are driving us to.

The father-son relationships in Shepard’s plays are particularly and strikingly tempestuous. Resembling his actual father, in the manner Shepard found in real life, the fathers in the various plays are stereotypes. Sam Shepard’s father was an officer in the army and later became addicted to drinking that instigated him to desert his family and goes to live alone in the wild and barren West. Shepard was born in Fort Sheridan on an army base. Shepard’s father had returned from the combat wounded and apparently emotionally disturbed. He had stood enigmatic throughout Shepard’s growth as a popular playwright. Shepard’s relationship with his father had always been a tumultuous affair. The conflict was an eternal one, as it did not resolve even after the death of the old man. He has once commented after the elder Rogers’ death, “my relationship with him now is exactly the same as when he was alive. It’s just as mysterious” (Sessums 76).

Shepard’s strained liaison with his father remained an obsession in him that it haunted him to the very heights of playwriting, remaining as a thread that connects Shepard’s quantum of work. But Shepard got a wider canvas in his “family plays” to give a detailed picture of the basic struggle between fathers and sons. In Curse of the Starving Class Weston the father and Wesley the son has headlong confrontations, with eruptions of a rebel from the son and ironic acknowledgements from a derelict and frustrated father. In spite of the differences the son is found ultimately donning the father’s costumes and inheriting his traits, fated to carry down the follies of generations. In the
plays succeeding *The Curse*, Shepard skilfully delineates the ire of emotionally hungry sons set in revolt against the abandoning fathers who live far away as recluse. In *True West* Mom’s husband and father to Austin and Lee live in the desert. *A Lie* also has the tale of the desertion of a father figure, Jake’s ‘old man,’ who prefers to live alone in an abandoned truck and gets killed by a truck on the high road like Shepard’s own father. The latest play *The Late Henry Moss* has also depicted the story of two brothers returning home to confront each other, their violent past and the death of their father, set in the mythic geography of American West. *Buried Child* shows emotionally deranged and spiritually estranged fathers, Dodge and Tilden, who fail even to recognise their children. Dodge perceives Vince as Tilden and Tilden mistakes Vince to be someone else. There are similar occasions of disowning and denials between fathers and sons in the play. In a similar way, there is a strange confusion of identities in the play *A Lie* also that leads to difficult situations. As an instance, Beth confuses Frankie for Jake and hence the atrocities of his brother and father are justified. Jake on the other hand fantasises the presence of Beth before him when it was actually his sister, Sally, who was caught in his dreadful grasp. There follows a violent session of the mother, Lorraine trying to save her daughter by hitting both her sons in the commotion.

Such virtual fantasies do grip the characters in the plays of Mamet also. They are down to earth characters, the down-and-outs caught in the frenzy of the flight for the heights of success, but destined to fall back to the harsh realities of tough competition in work places. To make up for this they indulge in telling fantastic stories of their march to success. It is in the course of the struggle for sustenance and existence such fantasies
crumble down that they indulge in aggression. They build up a fantastic world of playacting and story telling just to fill up the vacancies in their meaningless lives.