ALLEGORY AS SATIRE: SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND PERSONAL

"Satire," says Ian Jack, "is born of the instinct to protest; it is protest become art" (Arthur Pollard). Dr. Johnson in his Dictionary defined satire as a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured. Dryden and Defoe went farther, one claiming that "the end of satire is "the amendment of vices" and the other that "the end of 'satyr' is reformation". The satirist is nearly always a man who is deeply sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is. Much of the world's satire is the result of a powerful and even righteous indignation and is didactic in its objective. The satirist has a responsibility to truth and justice although satire is not always enlisted in the cause of truth and virtue.

Satire is one of the oldest literary modes. The fact that satire of some kind or other existed in literature from very early days and that it continues to exist shows that it is a natural form of perennial interest. Critics make a broad division between formal or direct satire and indirect satire.
In formal satire the satiric voice speaks out in the first person. Two types of satires are commonly distinguished, taking their names from the great Roman satirists Horace and Juvenal. The types are defined by the character of the person whom the author presents as the first person satiric speaker and also by the attitude and tone that such a persona manifests toward the subject matter and the readers of the work.

As is well known, in Horatian satire, the character of the speaker as manifested, is that of an urbane witty and tolerant man of the world who is moved to amusement than to indignation at the spectacle of human folly, pretentiousness and hypocrisy. His aim as Horace himself described was to “to laugh people out of their vices and follies”.

In Juvenalian satire, the character of the speaker is that of a moralist who uses a dignified and public style of utterance to decry modes of vice and error. The satirist evokes in the mind of readers contempt, moral indignation or an unillusioned sadness at the aberrations of humanity. Dr. Johnson’s “London” and “The vanity of Human wishes” are distinguished instances of Juvenalian satire.

Indirect satire is cast in some literary form other than that of direct address to the reader. The most common indirect form is that of a fictional
narrative in which the objects of the satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions obnoxious by what they think, say and do.

One type of such indirect satire is called Meneppean satire because it was developed by a cynic philosopher of Greece, Meneppus. It is sometimes called the Varronian satire, after a Roman imitator Varro. It should be noted that any narrative or other literary vehicle can be adopted to the purposes of indirect satire. The first satirist we know about, Archilochus, who lived in the seventh century B.C, was a Greek poet. Aristophanes, who practised the satirical mode in Rome, was a dramatist. His play *Lysistrata* launched a vigorous attack on the folly of war. The Roman poets Horace and Juvenal satirised city life and the vices and dangers of imperial Rome. This kind of denunciation and exposure of follies, excesses and vices is the typical Juvenalian tone. "Proper satire is distinguished by the generality of reflections...."66 (Arthur Pollard.3) because the satirist who is a guardian of ideals considers that the true end of satire is the amendment of vices. Juvenal in his "Satire III" indulges in scathing criticism of Rome, which he puts in the mouth of a poor, decent citizen who can endure no more of the corruption. This is how the poet distances himself from his own feelings. "A true satirist", as Ashley Brown remarks, "tries to get at his target indirectly"67 (Ashley Brown.3). Satire has been described in *A Glossary of*
Literary Terms “as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation” (M.H.Abrams.187) satire uses laughter as a weapon against a butt. The butt may be an individual or a type of person, a class, or institution, a nation or even the whole human race as in the case of Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels. As Alexander Pope remarked, those who are ashamed of nothing else, are so of being ridiculous.

Good satire has been written in every age, though the impulse to satirise is a more powerful force in our culture today. John Dryden “Absalom and Achitophel” turns Old Testament history into a satiric allegory on the Restoration Political manoeuvrings in England. Achitophel is the ambitious, unscrupulous demagogue of any age or country, Zimri is the epitome of all the brilliantly versatile amateurs whose gifts are never applied to any wise, stable or useful purpose. As Arthur Pollard remarks, “In God-like Davids’ representation of Charles II, Dryden was able at once to exalt the King by comparison to the lofty messianic monarch of Old Testament days” (Arthur Pollard.39).

Pope’s “Rape of the Lock” satirises the superficialities of an aristocratic society. The quarrel that arose from the young Lord Peter
snipping off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair, had estranged the two families.
The families had exaggerated the matter, so Pope exaggerated it still more.
The word "rape" in the title stresses the ridiculous exaggeration of the incident. Without distinction of importance, the loss of chastity is placed beside the cracking of an ornament and the staining of a dress. The distorted values of a whole society are exposed. Pope deals with a topic that is central in human experience. "The Rape of the Lock" is flippant in its tone, but it is fundamentally, a poem about values, particularly, values regarding chastity.

Satire is essentially a social mode and is always conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be.

Swift's Gulliver's Travels which is a fascinating tale of travels in wonderland, is also a powerful satire on man and human institutions. Such are the elements of art that Swift infuses into his work that it calls forth a world of allusions. In the first part, Gulliver, a surgeon on a Merchant ship, relates his ship-wreck on the island on Lilliput, where the inhabitants are only six inches tall.

In the Second part, Gulliver is accidentally left ashore Brobdignag, where the inhabitants are as tall as steeples. The third part is occupied with a visit of Gulliver to the flying island of Laputa, its capital Lagado and its
neighbouring continent. In Laputa Gulliver finds the wise-men so wrapped up in their speculations as to render them utter dotards in practical affairs. In part IV, the readers are introduced into the country of Huyhnhnms where the horses are endowed with "reason". The simplicity and virtues of the horses are contrasted with the disgusting brutality of the yahoos, beasts in the shape of men. The controversy between the Big-Endian and the Little-Endians as to which side of the egg should be broken first, parodies the nature of the religious quarrels between the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans. Gulliver undauntingly criticises the Brobdingnagian institutions and practices as the "miserable effects of a confined education". The "Yahoos" are the personification of the beastiality in human nature, which Swift condemns and contrasts against the humanity of the horses.

*Gulliver's Travels* is a social satire. It throws light upon the smallness of the means, the vanity of the motives, the illusion of the catchwords through which kings retain their thrones. Swift dissects not merely the political life of his time but the system of monarchy itself, the courts and courtiers, the debating assemblies, and the struggles of religious factions. He carries us from the country of the dwarfs to that of the giants. The fancy vanishes revealing to us the despicable parody of human reality, littleness and miseries. Animal life supplies us with figures of reasonable beings.
Swift is intellectually hostile to what exists and the honest expression of this hostility is the social criticism offered by him in the allegorical mode. In many of Blake's poems too allegory and satire are present together, but the distinction fades into imperceptibility.

I wander thro' each chartered street
Near where the chartered Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Mark of weakness, marks of woe

('London' here is both the allegory of a state of mind and an actual city whose way of life totally offended Blake's religious principles.

Later Jane Austen with the very titles of her novels, like Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility and Persuasion, almost recall the personification of abstract qualities in the allegorical interludes of the sixteenth century. She combines allegory and satire creatively together to give a new realistic propensity to her domestic themes. The characters proper to conventional allegory are personifications; they are impulses, moods, attitudes, virtues and vices. The satirical impulse has been the motivating force behind some of the best known works of the twentieth century. Aldous Huxley's, Brave New World and Orwell's Animal Farm continue this tradition. Animal Farm is a beast-fable adapted for modern political satire. Orwell proceeds from the revolution of farm animals against
their human master through an idealistic phase of egalitarianism to the usurpation of power by the pigs, which ultimately ends up in the dictatorship of one of them. Stage by stage, there are parallels with the history of Soviet Russia. Orwell makes *Animal Farm* more than an incidental satire. The novel grows into a powerful blast against political tyranny, based on the subversion of idealism anywhere at any time. Orwell restores allegory to its rightful place in literature. In *Animal Farm* the surface animal-story casts an aura of satire as it draws parallels from the socio-political scenario of Russia. The major events and personages of the Russian history from 1913 to 1943, the war of intervention, the New Economic Plan, the First Five Year Plan, the expulsion of Trotsky, the seizing of supreme political power by Stalin, the Great Purge Trials, the Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Germany are all allusively unfolded.

A similar beast-fable which turns out, to be a satiric allegory is Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. It depicts how the whole population of a town is changed into rhinoceroses. This is the author's equivalent of the various forms of collective hysteria.

*The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot, also may be considered a verse satire directed against what Eliot perceives as the spiritual dearth in the twentieth century life. It is a powerful allegory of the degeneracy of human nature, in
particular with regard to the experience of sex and nature of love. W.H. Auden also joined this fold by writing excellent satirical poems in which he allegorised the collapse of civilized standards. *The Unknown Citizen* evinces his concern for the state of an individual in the modern mass society. Authoritarian governments were rising to power in his days and they promoted fascism of sorts. A complete loss of identity, a total submission to the dictates of the state, absolute conformism, readiness to accept all forms of propaganda without questioning are virtues expected of an ideal citizen in those nations. Auden, in his poem, raises his voice against such meek submission to the call to conform.

The same morality structure, contributed by allegory, with its frequent satiric and realistic undertones, is a living presence in American literature. The early colonial writers did not look upon life as an artistic affair, it was sober duty for them. In the seventeenth century, the pulpit was the forum for learned exposition of religion, ethics, science and politics. Religious opposition to theatrical performances on moral ground, was widespread. But gradually American literature assumed responsibility and seriousness. Since about 1760 the most conspicuous tendencies of realism, social satire and social protest—commonly called "continental sophistication"—came to be noticed in all the various forms of American
literature. Drama being a visual medium, became the most expressive of this revolutionary spirit. In 1760s and 1770s voices of indignation were heard in American drama. Satire often arises from an immediate occasion, the indignation a writer feels in confronting a folly. Mrs Mercy Warren’s biting propaganda plays like *The Group*, *The Blockhead* and others satirised the Tories and made fun of General Burgoyne’s red-coats, calling for a complete rout of the British forces. Dion Boccicault presented his play *Octoroon* in 1859 which squarely attacked the practice of slavery. At the turn of the nineteenth century Clyde Fitch brought out the play *The City*, in which he exposed and condemned corruption in the lives of the public officials.

In 1910 Edward Sheldon came to the fore with a “shocker”, *The Nigger* with which he meant to touch the conscience of the social hypocrites. The play was about an “ambitious southern politician who on the eve of his success learns that he has Negro-blood in his veins; (to him) a discovery that spells disaster”\(^7\) (*Jean Gould*.5). Party Boss-rule in Politics is the theme of *The Boss*. The dramatists who indulged in active social criticism took upon themselves the didactic mission of awakening the public into an awareness of moral justice. Such plays became theatrical projections of moral consciousness.
In the early twentieth century, Eugene O’Neill with his avowed aloofness from social questions turned the search light into the predicament of man surrounded by forces that “he could neither comprehend nor manipulate”. He saw “the pursuit of material success as a threat to human dignity that frustrates creative joy in life for life’s sake, renders it abortive and converts man into a Mephistophiles mocking himself inorder to feel alive”72 (Jagadish Chandra.132). O’ Neill condemns outright machine-worship and Mammon—worship which are equally destructive of the Life-force.

Arthur Miller’s plays are sometimes listed as “social dramas”. They too deal with issues affecting contemporary society. Growing up in America during the years of Depression, Miller found the socio-political reality impinging with great force upon his imagination. Miller’s All My Sons is a powerful indictment of Joe Keller’s anti-social act of selling defective cylinder heads to the Air Force during the war, a compulsion forced upon him by the irrational laws of a jungle economy as by his own moral vulnerability Chris, his younger son realises the full horror of the “tainted money”. In Death of a Salesman, Miller portrays the world of big business, big money and success. Willie Loman ends up as a victim of this world. He had been a travelling salesman for the Wagner company for thirty four years. Now he is old, cannot travel far, can no longer trust himself to drive
a car and so wants a placement in the New York office of the company. Young Howard, the present manager, turns down the request and asks him to go on long leave. Loman's family is badly in need of money. Willie Loman commits suicide in a cleverly engineered car-crash, in order to leave his family the insurance money. The way of life in the business world is so heartless that it can make a man obsolete just as it does a piece of machinery.

In his most controversial play *The Crucible*, Miller protest vehemently against the modern witch-hunt of McCarthyism. The forces of reaction in the form of The House Committee on Un-American Activities began to repress the voices of social progress and social protest in the thirties and forties. Those who supported the much-needed social and political reforms were branded as revolutionaries and were persecuted. Arthur Miller was the first to speak up in protest against the modern witch-hunt, the hunt for the communists, engineered by Joe McCarthy, the young Wisconsin Senator. Miller believed that drama "is the art of the present tense". The play is concerned with the peculiar, social and political condition of America in the forties of the twentieth century, no doubt. But while drawing the parallel between the Salem Witch trials of the 1692 and the governmental investigations of illegal subversion in the country in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Miller had a greater moral concern in his mind as
he expressed in the ‘Introduction’ to his *Collected Plays* (Arthur Miller) 47

"I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter, but one of state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so." All along we can find the angry puritan along the Hawthorne - Melville line abiding by Miller.

American drama, as we have seen, has developed “a broad social awareness”. It has become a prime historical document that helps us to say something authentically about the age and the events. It has some of its definitive scenes which sum up man and his environments.

Juvenal felt that his age was so bad that it was difficult not to write satire. The same sort of compulsion is felt by all satirical writers. Satire always has a victim, it always criticizes. The satirist must at any rate convince his readers or audience that he means what he says. His role is that of a public benefactor, persuading the reader or the spectator to understand the real situation and take a stance. He convinces them that the underlying attitude of his has a permanent significance, transcending the ephemeral circumstances. In a satirical play, the spectacle on the stage is only a sign that leads to a greater speculation. Allegory should find its place here for it serves as a link between the spectacle and the speculation.
Sam Shepard who has been hailed as an all-American playwright, writing for a chosen people as it were, "digs at the roots of the sickness today"\(^{74}\) (\textit{O'Neill.1246}) in America, as he feels it. Shepard's subject proper is America. His dramatic output, as David J. DeRose points out, "is a satiric allegory of his exploded vision of reality, society and the self"\(^{75}\) (David J. De Rose.4). This Chronicler of the society gives us a meaningful statement about the post-modern America where things are falling apart. He illuminates the social and cultural politics of the country even as he reveals his own highly emotional response to life. At his worst, he mirrors American self-indulgence and immaturity. Shepard is a true man of the theatre; he does not see life as material for drama, he sees life as drama. Taken broadly, politics deals with the good life in human community as the adjustment between the personal and the social and of the desires and realities. In that sense, Shepard's plays are wholly political for they deal with values and authenticity. The subject of Sam Shepard is the sense of his own being in a particular place, at a particular time. Being a product of Post World War II era, and the now romanticised Eisenhower years, Shepard too came under the sway of the Hollywood dream-machine that was busy generating images of a victorious post-war America of heroic proportions and bigger than life stars and adventures. Frederic Jameson in
one of his essays on Post-modernism describes a world very much like the one in which Shepard grew up.

"At some point following World War II, a new kind of society began to emerge.... New types of consumption, planned obsolescence and even more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes, the penetration of advertising, television and the media generally to a hitherto unparalleled degree throughout society, the replacement of the old tension between city and country, centre and province by the suburb and the universal standardisation, the growth of the great net-work of super highways and the arrival of the automobile culture ___ these are some of the features which would seem to mark a radical break with that older pre-war society"76 (Frederic Jameson.224-255).

The immediate world of Shepard is that of youth culture of his contemporaries. It has in it the western deserts, Cowboys, Hopi Indians, the Car Culture, a kind of, "junk magic" the seductive power and the tinsel of Hollywood and the heavy metal of rock-n-roll. The industrial boom and along with that the transportation facilities broke like a tidal wave over a previously rural life style. It is not merely this change in the socio-economic
scenario that is significant to Shepard but the trauma caused by the destruction of the traditional agrarian way of life and the loss of the farmers' sense of attachment to the land. Shepard's play *Curse of the Starving Class*, depicts how a rural family is hustled out of their valuable property. *Operation Sidewinder*, exemplifies the lack of alignment between the technologically advanced man and his primitive environment. In the 1970s when the American war with Vietnam was still raging and the Water Gate scandal very much alive in the political circles, Shepard moved to London with bag and baggage and his family, in the hope of re-structuring himself into a rock-and-roll star. The dream did not materialise, but the trip resulted in two important plays *The Tooth of Crime* and *Action*, of which the former is about two Rock Stars. Back at home the relentless experimenter re-invented himself as a family playwright by writing *Curse of the Starving Class* and *Buried Child*. The Pulitzer prize winning play, *Buried Child* placed Shepard in the American Canonican mainstream of drama. In a world that looks unfixed, the family is the source of pain and consolation alike. As Samuel G.Freedman has noted, "the measure of achievement in American drama has been a writer's ability to place a vivid family portrait within a larger social frame" (Samuel G. Freedman.1). In 1991, during the Gulf war Shepard staged *States of Shock* which has been described by critics as a "fierce
anti-war play”. It reveals how America continues to crack open along the fault line of violence.

Shepard’s expressive Theatre embodies American themes of vigorous power and mystery; the quarrel with paternal authority, the loss of the land and the fall from Edenic possibility into an iron city, the transgressions and impingements on the artist by the interests of commercial greed. His is a world that is unhinged, chaotic, a world where the inhabitants have become suddenly strangers, a world where a multi-million dollar computer is created to achieve the ends once established through communal rituals; a world where one feels “worse than being homeless”. It is this personal trauma of post-modern anxiety, despair and anguish reworked in the context of a society that insists on its victories that we find in the plays of Sam Shepard.

Shepard once said that he was not interested in the “American social scene at all”78(Amy Lippman.9) and that he does not have any “political theories”. But as Frank Rich has remarked, Shepard does not consider it “unfair” to read a political or social meaning into his plays, but finds it only an incomplete, a partial way of looking at the play, if it is reduced to only one of these meanings. Because beyond the political or social meaning, he strives to reach “an emotional territory” with a much wider dimension.
In plays such as *Angel City*, *The Tooth of Crime*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *La Turista*, *Operation Sidewinder*, *Fool for Love* and *States of Shock*, Shepard holds the mirror up to the society, wherein is reflected the varied aspects of disintegration. He has no neatly tied solution for any of these social problems; he wants the audience to think and act. That is why he is calling for an intellectually involved audience. In an interview, on being asked what effect he would like his plays to have on the audience, Shepard said that he hoped "to transform the emotions of the people watching". He added "people come into the theatre....expecting something to happen and then hopefully when they walk out of the theatre the chemistry is changed" (Kenneth Chubb.202).

Shepard’s dramatic vision, especially in the plays written during the seventies, dwells on the actual contemporary society. *Angel City* is a spectacular satire on the film industry. The historicity of the play involves Hollywood and American big business. *Angel City* as the name implies is set in Los Angeles or atleast a mythical version of a part of the city Hollywood. *Angel City* (1976) represents the culmination of the first decade of Sam Shepard’s career as a dramatist. The theme in *Angel City* is "power", - power played against the background of movies and their compelling hold on our imaginations and lives. The play speaks about the allure and
promise of the films to bring meaning into drab lives. The play highlights also the destructive danger that living in dream-machines brings to the individual viewer, the artist and the society.

Set in a culver city studio, the play has in it a motley bunch of characters desperately trying to invent an idea for a disaster movie, powerful enough to stimulate the jaded sensibilities of the public and to distract them from the man-made urban catastrophes which they inhabit. *The Angel City* is peopled with tyrannical producers, hopeful actresses, exploited artists, script-writers, musicians and studio bosses who manipulate the dreams of the multitude.

Rabbit Brown, the mystical writer, a collage figure with his tennis shoes and an Indian Medicine bundle, has been called from his Northern Californian home and pressed into service to save the faltering horror film. Wheeler, the producer who has been transformed into a "raging maniac" urges him to create a film capable of galvanising the beleaguered and jaded masses into apocalyptic frenzy. He orders Rabbit to "...create mass hypnosis, suicide, auto destruction"80 (*Angel City*.16).

The characters of *Angel City* are all confined in one place. It is the one-dimensional universe which contains the locus of desire. All the
characters have fantasies which are in one way or another structured by movies. Wheeler desires his ultimate immortality conferred by the charismatic image of film. Rabbit is “ravenous for power”, the power of the “vision of a celluloid tape” Tympani, the Shaman of music and rhythm, is at work “ to create an original rhythm guaranteed to produce certain trance-like states in masses of people”. He is on a fantastic experiment to invent “a never-before - heard- before rhythm which will drive men crazy” (Angel City.22). Miss Scoons seems to be the most susceptible to the spell of the films. She has been mesmerised by her own pipe-dreams of stardom. Lanx secretly wishes to be a famous boxer, much sought after by the media for on-screen interviews. Everyone learns by and by that there is no escape from the deception of the Hollywood desiring machine. As Tympani puts it to Rabbit “They feed off your hunger. They’ll keep you jumping at carrot and you will keep jumping. And you’ll keep thinking you’re not jumping all the time you are jumping” (Angel City .17). And yet the characters have chosen to stay back in the Angel City because the city offers them refuge and protection from the threatening world outside. Protection in Angel City is provided by the power of money. Miss Scoons has set forth the equation that guides the lives of all characters in the play: “Money equals power, equals protection, equals eternal life.” According to
her, the ambition behind the urge to create also is basically the ambition for power. The billion dollar industry has its lure and power, and the large black chair placed centre-stage is the huge seat of power. As in Ionescos *Rhinoceros* in which everyone is transformed into rhinoceroses, in *Angel City* the city is turning everyone into reptiles. As David J. De Rose has noted "Angel City is plagued by the lure of wealth, power and material comforts which turns its citizen into reptilian monsters so that they may protect their position, their money, their exclusive life-styles" (De Rose). Rabbit and Tympani, the two Shaman-like artists, also finally trade their creative energy for the commercial potential of a Vampire art and a consumerist culture. The green slime that oozes from Rabbit and Wheeler and spreads over the stage at the end of the play, has become at once the metaphor for the standard horror movie material and the pervading influence of the movies in our life and imagination.

Innocent, naive and eager individuals like Miss Scoons, most easily fall victims to the illusions generated by the film industry. The alienating effect that films can have on our perception of reality is best expressed by Scoons. "I look at the screen and I am the screen. I am not me. I don't know who I am. I look at the movie and I am the movie. I am the star in the movie for days I am the star and not me..." (Angel City) Even a dedicated artist
like Rabbit cannot stay immune to the seductive dreams woven by the film industry. There is another reason why he is lured of the celluloid tape. It tells “a story to millions of people” and influences masses of people. Any force that influences masses of people “effecting their dreams, actions,... replacing religion, politics, art....” should be considered as a real source of power. And Rabbit is unashamedly enamoured of power. Thus *Angel City* is an allegory of the modern filmic civilization of America, in which everyone is a prisoner against his will.

The stage-world of Sam Shepard is shaped out of the American cultural and pop-cultural expectations of the audience and the myth and mystique that Shepard himself is as an artist. His plays are a constant mirror of his own aspirations and indulgences as an artist and an individual. Rabbit is a self-portrait on Shepard’s part—the counter cultural writer torn between art and ambition. Tympani is a secondary self-portrait of the dramatist. He is a percussionist hired to create an original rhythm “guaranteed to produce certain trance-states in masses of people” (*Angel City*.22). Shepard like Tennessee Williams, very often transforms moments of personal experience so as to provide them a local habitation in his plays. Tympani’s unusual occupation with the rhythm recalls his own experience as a drummer with the Holy Modal Rounders in the sixties. “I looked straight down at’ my hands
and I saw somebody playing the pattern. It was not me but a different body” (Angel City-22).

_The Tooth of Crime_ is another allegorical play in which the satirical thrust is shifted over to the society. Shepard unveils before us a society where “crude power is glamourised”. The play is an ambitious stage-metaphor wherein he draws together various strands of American life to produce an image of insensate brutality. It is about an ageing Elvis Presley model Rock-star, a garrulous fellow of the Old West called Hoss whose position as master of the game is threatened by Crow, a young “gipsy” renegade who ignores the code and depends on his own ruthlessness and bravado to stay alive. Hoss is approaching middle-age and he fears growing in a society that discards the artist when a new fad comes along. He feels that his supremacy is slipping away. “I feel so trapped. so fucking unsure. Everything is a mystery. I had it all in the palm of my hand. The gold, the silver, I knew, I was sure. How could it slip away like that”?83 (The Tooth of Crime .227).

Hoss is aware of the vulnerability of an older order and the inevitability of being replaced. He has been working within a “code”, a code which gives meaning to his action. But now he lives in a time when “the
code's going down the tube". The heroic man with a code of honour has been corrupted by money, drugs and power. Crow represents pure anarchy and his chief weapon is his plasticity, his ability to change his stylistic form. Hoss and Crow are destined to fight for domination of their world. The great star-war is set up like a boxing match. The climactic duel is fought with words, backed some of the time, by music. "The Tooth of Crime is a play in two acts. Act One is about the complex drama of waiting for the showdown, the confrontation. Act Two leads up to the show-down itself. The meeting between Hoss and Crow is a conflict of idioms"^84 (Irving Wardle.11).

Act Two is a prolonged verbal encounter in which the old veteran is outmanoeuvred, some times by the fresh vigour of his adversary, his desperate confidence, his slight regard for the code and sometimes by the propriety of the referee. Hoss kills the referee in a fit of rage and is momentarily unnerved by his rash, code-defying crime. As a final gesture he yields to the bargain and surrenders his hegemony, his "turf" to Crow, with an appeal that Crow should teach him "how to be a man" to face his altered state and cope with his loneliness. However, Hoss fails to learn how to be a "totally lethal human"^85(Sam Shepard.217) and prefers to
commit one final act of integrity by shooting off a gun in his mouth. Hoss yields to a necessity which is powerful.

The world that Hoss and Crow inhabit is made up of a "bare stage except for an evil looking chair... something like the Egyptian Pharaoh's throne" (Sam Shepard, 205) The Chair is the symbol of power of supremacy. Hoss and Crow are archetypal characters, contending brothers, rival race-car drivers, rock stars who are one and two on the charts, opposing candidates for public office, or "any pair in American life in a savage state of aggressive competition" (William Herman, 30). In Alaska and Greenland all disputes, except murder, are settled by a song duel even today.

The play which Shepard describes as the "talking opera", allegories the decadent world of rock-music in the 70s in America; the reality behind the exterior of the rock-business. The world of rock-music is organised like crime syndicates. The rock-stars represented by Hoss and Crow are fighting for control over Las Vegas, the symbol of crime and fantasy in America. Competition is at the heart of this business; it is the competition to fight, to get to the top and stay there. In Hoss, Shepard finds an artist whose work is an expression of his deepest self and also the expression of the inner being of the American people. Hoss is thus, a throw back upon the glory that is
authentic America, which has a code, a style, "the presence of something real behind" (David J. De Rose.55) Shepard associates Crow with the man of the future, who is disconnected and unsympathetic to the out-moded conventions. He has no style of his own, no codes, he holds no liaison to history but proficiently mimics the values of the old to suit his purpose. He is the representative of the post-modern America, the fallen America. Shepard, probably, believes that these two characters together might usher in a new kind of American culture.

In The Unseen Hand, once again Shepard trains his guns against political power with its institutional coersion and mind control. Willie comes form Nogoland where "slaves work day and night" under constant guard by the soldiers of the "Raven Cult". He arrives in Azusa (Everything from A to Z in the U.S.A) inorder to enlist the aid of a 120 year old gun fighter, Blue Morphan and two of his long dead brothers, Cisco and Sycamore (who were brought back to life later by Willie) in freeing his people from "the sorcerers of the High Commission". In the contemporary technological society the ruling forces have their hidden mind-controlling techniques. Willie's people in Nogoland, are implanted with an unseen hand that creates an excruciating spasm whenever their thought transcend those of the magicians. Nogoland is the distant galaxy from which both Willie and
America have come. The black hand print burnt into the top of Willie's skull is emblematic of the omniscient power's control, it is an image of socio-political oppression. It is Willie's ritualistic incantation of Kid's speech recited backward that frees the people from the unseen hand. The solution sounds like a fairy-tale but all the same, it also suggests the deconstruction of authority by reversing their language. With Shepard, language has always been the weapon to fight, to protect and also to explode.

*States of Shock*, which marked the return of the playwright to the theatre after a six-year silence in the wake of the production of *A Lie of the Mind*, is a play with a great historicity. It is a comment on a specific moment in American history. The play is an overtly political response to the American governments' military invasion of Iraq in February 1991, and the very complacent reaction of the American public to that invasion.

*States of Shock*, on its most obvious level, is a confrontation between a father figure and a disinherited son, two figures who take on both socio-political dimensions and mythic proportions. The father known only as "Colonel" in the play is an archetypal military man who glorifies war. Stubbs, the disabled veteran of an unidentified war, is a Christ-like martyr who survived a direct hit from an incoming artillery and is now bound to a wheel-chair decorated with small American flags. Stubbs may or may not
be Colonel's son. Colonel insists that his son died heroically in combat. Stubbs, the Colonel says, is his son's best friend who was severally wounded while unsuccessfullly trying to save the life of his son. Colonel has apparently kidnapped stubbs from a hospital and has brought him to the restaurant to commemorate his son on his first death anniversary. While Colonel claims that stubbs is a war hero he has a very different story to tell. Stubbs cautiously suggests that he is Colonel's son and that he was struck by a missile when he was running away from battle. Stubbs is denied his identity because his father does not acknowledge his kinship. He was lured into the battle by the patriarchal myths that guided him. Now, having been left physically "mutilated, emotionally and spiritually demented" and literally impotent, he has all his romanticised illusions about war removed from his mind. His words sound like pure irony as he tells the white couple he meets in the family restaurant. "The middle of me is all dead. The core. I'm eighty percent mutilated. The part of me that goes on living has no memory of the parts that are all dead. They've been separated for all time. They'll never have a partner. You're lucky to have a partner" \textsuperscript{89} (States of Shock.13). Through stubbs, Shepard projects "the pity of war, the pity war distilled" According to David J.De Rose, "Stubbs is the image of inglorious war and its brutal aftermath, known to Shepard's generation" \textsuperscript{90} (David J.De Rose.135). As
stubbs wheels himself to the edge of the stage, pulling up his shirt and baring his chest to thrust the wound in the faces of the audiences, the trauma and betrayal of the war experience tear through their consciousness.

The conflict between Colonel and Stubbs begins in the restaurant when the Colonal asks him to re-enact the battle scene in which his son was killed. Stubbs can no longer stand the foolery. He realises desperately that he has been robbed of everything that makes life worth-living. To his dismay he is convinced that he does not embody Colonel’s picture of a war-hero. To prove that he is a man and worthy to be Colonel’s son, Stubbs starts flirting with the waitress Glory Bee and finally feels that his “thing” is coming back. He regains his manhood with the “help” or rather “use” of a woman. This gives him confidence which enables him to get a greater mileage in the conflict with Colonal. Colonal also realises his losing hold upon Stubbs.

The physical show-down witnessed by the elderly couple described as “Cadavers” by Shepard has its special social significance. The White Man and the White woman have been introduced as the emissaries of the middle class, the mute, inspired representatives of the establishment. They are people who very seldom notice anything that is not directly related to them.
The woman repeatedly complains about the inadequate service in the restaurant. One of the few times she seems to notice what is going around her is when Colonel slaps Stubbs across the face. She encourages him and says “Give it to him! You should have done that when he was just a little boy. All of this could have been avoided” from States of Shock.25. The White Man who is evidently used to the sadistic spells of his wife does not react. He seems to be under her control. It is an irony that Colonel who is a man of war through and through and who personifies the male American legacy should be so subservient before his wife.

Glory Bee, the Black waitress, is treated in a highly symbolic fashion. Her name reflects her belief in America as the land of Promise, while her status, as a member of the serving class, as a woman, and as a person of colour, confirms the subservient role that such marginalised groups must play in the power-games of authoritarian white men like Colonel. “It is Glory Bee, image of America’s powerless majority, who must wait on Colonel and Stubbs who must clean up when they make their boyish messes and who must become the sexual object, for whom and over whom they eventually fight” from David J. De Rose. 150.

Jack Kroll, the theatre-critic calls the play, “a political passion badly needed in American Theatre” from Susan Willadt. XXXVI. States of Shock was
written with the earnest conviction that stage is still an effective platform for political dissent and mobilisation of public opinion. But Shepard does not provide a resolution at the end. According to him “it’s a cheap trick to resolve things, totally a complete lie to make resolutions” (Amy Lippmann). At the end of the play, the two protagonists Colonel and Stubbs, stand frozen in a position of eternal confrontation and hostility and readiness for violence, as Lee and Austin in True West.

Angel City, The Tooth of Crime, The Unseen Hand and States of Shock evince Shepard’s highly emotional response to the power-game prevailing in American politics. Shepard further allegorizes themes like decay and disintegration in the family and society, the son’s struggle to discover his authentic origin and heritage, the artists’ isolation in a commercial culture, the self-made man and the horrors of solipsism—the list extends itself.

As Gary Grant has pointed out, much of Shepard’s social satire has his personal experiences as the spring-board for his creative art. His plays are rooted in the “surface” experiences of his own life. The smells, the sights and the objects in places where he has lived haunt his plays and they get transformed into the collective objects of American culture. He creates a sense of mystery out of the actual and a sense of an alien environment out of a familiar one. In a short manifesto called Shepard’s
Notebook, kept along with the Boston University special collections, Shepard has noted,

"A play must be a metaphor. A play must reveal itself. A play must be revelation. A revelation must be realized. A realization must be realized by the emotions. The emotion must be moved. The intellect must realize that the emotions are moved. The movement must be toward something higher......."

Certainly, Shepard had a palpable design in his plays, which act as metaphors and images transform his own consciousness. The plays, from the earliest to the most recent ones, show an evolution from a single-point perspective on the self to a multiple perspective which includes his relationships to the land, his heritage, and his personal relationships. They tend to be an observation of the self in relation to a specific sense of place, time and the cultural history. It is an act of remembering and relating of events, thus forging a new alliance between himself and the world in which he lives. Curse of the Starving Class relates to his teenage years in Southern California and moments of separation from his family. Like Eugene O'Neill he remained an "eternal son" and was obsessed with familial relations. Buried Child relates to his earliest memories in Illinois. True West is about his experiences in the suburbs of Hollywood. Fool for Love chronicles his
desire for and rejection of relationship with women. But these plays do mean more than what has been stated above. This is exactly the nature of confessional literature, an attempt to heal a basic breach between the self and the others. In other words, it is the transformation of the personal into the universal, primarily relating it to the social reality of the present. What he speaks about himself is as much true about the society in which he lived.

In the five full length plays written between 1978 and 1985, *Curse of the Starving Class, Buried Child, True West, Fool for Love* and *A Lie of the Mind* Shepard breaks into the unchartered territory of his family history. Bits and pieces of his family story make up the raw-material for the majority of his plays. He is reported to have said recently “What doesn’t have to do with family? we all come out of each other__every one is born out of a mother and father and you go on to be a father. It’s an endless cycle”95 (*Henry Schevey*.18).

Born on an army base in Fort Sheridan, Shepard was actually nicknamed Steve to distinguish him from is father. Shepard’s recollection of his name in *Motel Chronicles* indicates a revealing: “My name came down through seven generations of men with the same name as the father...” Shepard was named Samuel Steve Rogers Shepard. He chose to drop the
Rogers part of it to become Sam Shepard. Thus the dramatist “murdered” his father and cut himself off from seven generations of Rogers males. The relationship between the father and the son was always filled with conflict and the feeling of perpetual abandonment. Shepard’s father was a pilot in the Army Air Corps in Italy. On his return from Combat, wounded and apparently disturbed emotionally, Shepard’s father became an alcoholic. He left for a solitary life in the desert. Despite his son’s increasing popularity and fame, the father remained an enigmatic and reclusive figure living in the desert. *The Rock Garden*, one of his early plays, which addresses issues of domestic life like alienation of youth in an average American family, has his own home and his parents as the background. In the first scene, the play depicts a boy and a girl drinking milk at the dinner table. Their father seated at the table is immersed in a Magazine and pays no attention to the children. In the second scene their mother lies upstage with several blankets covering her. She speaks obsessively about the Man, her husband and the absent father of the opening scene. She describes how he used to pick mushrooms in the forest, his attempts to build a tree-house and his isolation from the rest of the family. In a later scene the boy and the Man sit together in their underwear, the Man on a couch and the Boy in a rocking chair. They do not communicate. The boy never turns to address the Man, he delivers all his
lines into the air. The Man does most of the speaking. His speech is punctuated all along with “you know”? , “you know what I mean” __ interrogations meant for establishing communication. The boy nods off to sleep from boredom and now and then falls off from the rocking chair. The boy never responds to his father’s questions, but suddenly explodes into a graphic cataloging of sexual pleasures, which begins “when I came it is like a river”. The boy also punctuates his speech with “you know”. Now the refrain takes on a calculated edge. Eventually, the Man falls off his coach. None of the four characters communicate anything in the play. The play, as Henry Schevey has noted, “is a simple dramatization of adolescent rebellion”.96(Henry Schevey.XXXVI). The visual image of the man falling off his coach, at the end of the play, manifests the enormous distance between the personal experience of two people living under the same roof as aliens. The boy’s dark world of sexuality has the power to shake the world of the Man he has built around himself. Like O’Neill, Shepard moves past his own family situation to view alienation as a global phenomenon.

In Curse of the Starving Class Shepard raises one of his personal and private pre-occupations to the universal level. Father Weston is a character closely fashioned on Shepard’s father. Set on a dried up artichoke farm in California, Curse of the Starving Class transcends Shepard’s personal history
with a broader vision of an America, destitute and damp with blood guilt. Emma, the mother in the play says, "So, no one is starving, we don't belong to the starving class". Shepard's family was deprived of spiritual nourishment though they never had to go without food. The play opens with the family's teenage son Wesley Cleaning up the pieces of a broken-door. The previous night, in an intoxicated rage Weston had battered down the door with his body. Weston's violent attack upon his own home is both literal and symbolic, an action signifying the destruction of the protective circle of the family. The home has been left exposed by the dissolution of the family and the estrangement of the father and the mother. Strangers who plan to buy the house appear in the scene as a result of Weston's and Ella's individual attempts to sell the house and farm, without the knowledge of the other. The play is about the sudden invasion of a small southern California farming community by the suburban sprawl of housing developments and super highways, the industrial boom, literally wiping out the tiny farming communities and their way of life. Ella dreams of going to Europe, Emma the Tom-boyish daughter wants to become a car-mechanic, Wesley plans an avocado business. It was in such a society Shepard grew up where the rural life-style was made to look obsolete by the "Zombie invasion". The word "curse" in the title refers to the impersonal invasion
of the un-controllable socio-economic forces into the family unit. Literally speaking, it refers to the terrifying violation of a drunken father who smashes down the front door in a drunken fit, leaving the family vulnerable even to further violation. The central image of the play is hunger - the spiritual starvation which destroys the family despite the efforts of the son to hold it together. Wesley builds a new door, an act symbolic of his desire to keep the home and the family intact. The destruction of the family is linked to the social devastation. Wesley tells his sister Emma-

There will be bull dozers crashing through the orchard. There will be giant steel bulls crashing through the walls. There will be foremen with their sleeves rolled up and blue prints under their arms. There will be steel girders spanning acres of land. Cement pilings ———. A zombie city! Right here! Right where we are living now97 (Curse of the Starving Class.83).

Like the eagle holding the cat in its talons in mid-air - an extraordinary event in the story narrated by Ella and Wesley, Shepards' vision in the play is of an endless cycle of destruction in which no one survives. The starving class succumbs to its own hope for an impossible future. The play is forewarning giver to the American society about the disaster to which it is heading after the elimination of the small farming communities.
Curse of the Starving Class is an autobiographical play that reminds one of Tennessee Williams or William Inge. It is about an impoverished Southern California ranching family on the verge of ruin and also about the impoverishment that has engulfed the entire nation.

In 1978 when he began to write a string of family plays, he had in his mind a fund of experiences and memories of a particular kind related to his family. As David J. De Rose records in his book on Sam Shepard, sometime in 1968 Shepard had travelled to Los Angeles in connection with the recording of a musical Album with Holy Modal Rounders. Like Vince the long-lost son in Buried Child he stopped in Illinois to visit his grandparents. He then moved on to the south-west where he found his father living alone in the desert. Between them, they fought bitterly. In the family plays which began with Curse of the Starving Class (1978), through Buried Child (1979), True West(1981), A Fool for Love (1983) and A Lie of the Mind (1985) "the autobiographical presence of a young man haunted by unresolved ties to family, father and personal heritage"98 (David J. DeRose.91) is clearly evident.

Buried Child subscribes to many of the events in the life of Shepard. In Motel Chronicles he has recorded his trip to Illinois to visit his grandparents after the silence of more than six years. The farm looks abandoned
and has not produced a crop of corn since 1935. Grandpa, who is senile and debilitated, is a skeleton sitting in the hole of his sofa wrapped in cochetted blankets facing the T.V. Very clear parallels are drawn between Dodge in *Buried Child* and his own grand-father who did not recognise him at the first instant of his visit. In *Buried Child*, Vince comes to visit his Parental home, along with his girl friend Shelley. Nobody in the household recognises Vince. The Dodge-Halie couple has three sons—Ansel, Bradley and Tilden. Ansel is dead. Bradley is maimed and Tilden is reduced to a state of child-like dependency. It is suggested in the play that Tilden is actually Vince’s father. It is also suggested that the ‘buried child’ was the result of an incestuous relationship between Tilden and his mother. It is also derived from the play that it is Dodge who drowned the baby and buried it in the backyard. There is a similarity between the attitude of Dodge to ‘the buried child and to Vince. “You are no son of mine”99(*Buried Child* .97) stated Dodge categorically to Vince. Regarding the buried child he says, “....we could not allow that to grow up in the middle of our lives”100(*Buried Child*.124). That was the family secret. It was so secret in fact that everybody was convinced that it never happened. The family’s refusal to recognise Vince is part of a deeper failure on their part to acknowledge him as one of their own.
Vince leaves, having suffered the pain of being a stranger in his own home. On the wind shield of his car he examines his face and discovers its unique connectedness with his forefathers. His face became his father’s face. Vince finds his father, his family and his personal heritage within himself. Against his will and without his knowing it, they have inhabited his body. Vince returns to the house of his forefathers with a determination to claim his inheritance. He struts along exacting his revenge and claim of ownership and amidst his actions he learns that Dodge is dead. With Dodge’s death, Vince becomes the self-declared head of the family. “He lies down on the sofa, arms folded behind his head, staring at the ceiling....” (Buried Child .132) The position of his body suggests death, not life. Yet he cannot run away from his heritage, it is his inescapable destiny. Biological roots, sometimes appear to be entrapping and even destructive. Yet the individual is drawn to them instinctively.

Set in the mid-west of Shepard’s birth, Buried Child is a successful effort to retell his family history, from the lost farm of his grand parents, through his father’s mysterious abandonment, down to his own attempts to become reconciled to his own past. On a broader perspective, the familiar disintegration depicted in Buried Child suggests the deterioration of the American family in general. Here again the personal and the autobiographical incidence gains an allegorical mileage.
"Buried Child" may also be described as "the epitaph for the American family as an institution." The family depicted in the play is a black-hole where every member is held in a deadly grip. It is a ghostly place where everyone has to encounter a skeleton in the cupboard. Vince, the youngest member of the family, had severed all connections with his family long since. He had been living the "debauched life of the artist" in the big city. The family atmosphere is stifling. The essential element of love is missing in the most endeared institution. It is a savage world of violence and dominance.

It signifies the betrayal of the cherished American dream of peace, harmony, wealth, and supremacy. Shelley is the innocent and the untainted among the whole lot of characters to whom the "buried secret" is revealed. It is to her the secret holds the greatest threat too.

Vince represents the archetypal questing hero, searching for his heritage and seeking to carry out his destiny. He embodies in him drive, earnestness, ambition, and adventurousness—the great virtues we associate with the typical American. Vince also belongs to the tradition of violence. His act of violence at the end of the play, makes him a true descendent of Dodge who nurtures the same tradition. The putrifying body of the baby is the symbol, the physical manifestation of the decay of the family.
Nobody at home recognises Vince on his arrival. Dodge says, "your are no son of mine". But somewhere in the memory of Tilden a bell rings. He recognises something about Vince. "I thought I saw a face inside the face". Probably, it was the face of the child before it was killed. It is the face of the American eager for fulfillment. Tilden, purified by suffering redeems himself. He lives the maternity principle and nurtures the child. As Dodge said, "He'd walk all night out in the pasture with it. Talking to it. Singing to it. Used to hear him singing to it"\textsuperscript{102}\textemdash\textit{Buried Child.124}. The one who has nurtured the child is the one who will make the earth fruitful again. Purified by suffering he is the first to notice the vegetables growing in the backyard. Tilden is the symbol of the promise of and hope for a revitalised America for in the play he is the only one who nurtures the children. Shepard suggests that returning to the American dream of bountiful Eden is possible only when the crimes of the past are acknowledged and atoned for.

\textit{A Fool for Love} is another family play, Shepard has written, with autobiographical strain and allegorical implications. He had been separated from his wife, O'Lan and had gone to live with Jessica Lange when the play was written. \textit{A Fool for Love} is the story of a woman who is tied to a man who proves to be unfaithful to her. But for the presence of an old Man in the play, it could have been described as a play about a love-triangle.
Nevertheless, the Old Man exists only in the minds of May and Eddie the main characters.

May and Eddie are lovers. They have been going steady for sixteen years, since High school. But Eddie, periodically obsessed with fantasies about other women, keeps leaving her only to return and claim her again. It is after such a break-up when he came to see her that they began a low-level argument over "the countess" with whom Eddie is supposed to have an affair. May, maddened with jealousy, shouts, "I am gonna kill her and then I am gonna kill you"\(^\text{103}\) (Fool for Love.23). Eddie is trying to pacify her. He is now prepared to take her back. He has everything worked out for a peaceful life with her, "a piece of ground up in Wyoming" for example. May rebels and frees herself. She moves out to a town in Mojave desert, where she finds for herself a job as a cook. She is too proud to accept any compromise. May draws a clear parallel with O' Lan, when in the final scene she is quietly packing up her suitcase, her face redolent with a sense of resignation, strength, pride and dignity. She has to choose another path because as she says to Eddie, he "suckered me into some dumb little fantasy and then dropped me like a hot rock". Now she feels that her love for Martin is stronger. She is divided in her love.
The Old Man who is sitting on a rocker, is the presiding genius of the play, pointing to an imaginary picture on the wall, whom he calls Barbara Mandiff he reminisces

"That’s the woman of my dreams. That is who that is. And she is mine. She is all mine. Forever”.

He continues, “Well, now see, now that’s the difference right there. That is, I am actually married to Barbara Mandrell in my mind. Can you understand that?”

Eddie: Sure.

The Old Man: Good I am glad we have an understanding” (Fool for Love, 27).

Probably, the Old Man is making an attempt to force the audience into a cheaper notion of the meaning of human passion. It is the power of imagination, fantasy, that creates something more lasting and true than what may be real. The kind of love generated and sustained by fantasy is juxtaposed with the kind that is too mundane, and self-defeats like the love of Eddie and May.

Shepard’s inner unresolved conflict with his father continues to surface forth in A Fool for Love when he has to deal with a father-figure.
Having excited the passion between Eddie and May, the Old Man mercilessly explodes their emotional world, by revealing an Ibsen-like secret that Eddie and May are brother and sister. The details of his bigamous relations with their respective mothers follow. The father abandons the children, typically refusing to accept any responsibility for their incestuous passion.

*A Fool for Love* reveals love in all its complexities, its betrayals, its jealous competitions, anguishing ordeals no less than its victories. *Fool for Love* is the celebration of passion which has little to do with the rational world. As its epigraph observes “The proper response to love is to accept it....”\(^{105}\) (C.W.E. Bigsby,248).

The Old Man is a victim of love and also the cause of suffering to those who gave their love to him. To Shepard also love has been the source of pain and absurdity. It has also been his path to transcendence. *A Fool for Love* as his *A Lie of the Mind* is concerned with the relationship of men and women in America, something that Shepard once described to a British journalist as “terrible and impossible”.

*True West* focusses on the relationship of two brothers, Ivy League Austin and the “ne’er-do-well” Lee. They compete in composing a movie
scenario about the true west. The play has its familial and social resonances. Austin lives "up north" with his family. He has come to the South to "develop" a film script for the Hollywood producer, Saul Kimmer. The house belongs to his 'Mom' and Austin is taking care of her plants. She is in Alaska on vacation. Austin is in his mid-thirties and neatly dressed. He has rather a frail physique and a full head of hair. Lee looks ten years older Balding, Scruffy, he looks like a bum. The brothers are not merely physical but psychological opposites. At first Austin tries to be patient with Lee's intrusion, but as his brother's attitude becomes increasingly sarcastic and aggressive, Austin becomes frustrated.

Lee resents Austin's achievements and way of life: his Ivy League Diploma, his middle-class status, his job as a writer. The tension and the conflict that had developed earlier become worse now. Lee takes over the kitchen first. His demanding presence destroys Austin's concentration. Lee then forces Austin to loan him his car. Austin knows that Lee is a petty thief and intends to use it to rob "Mom's" neighbours. But the worst shock was when Lee breaks in on Austin's conference with Saul Kimmer and badgers Kimmer into agreeing to consider an idea Lee himself has for a "true-to life western". Austin becomes desperate because his sense of self, his own convictions and the very concept of reality are turned upside-down in no
time. Lee's world is unfixed as well. He wants to capture Austin's ability to fit into the urban society and get paid for "dreaming."

A personality transference takes place in the two characters. Both brothers want to destroy or steal a part of the other that each alternately idealises and disparages. Lee becomes a screen writer trying to concentrate at the type-writer. Austin, after Kimmer confirms that his project has been cancelled, gets roaring drunk threatens to "make a little tour through Mom's neighbourhood" perhaps committing bigger crimes than Lee "ever dreamt of." Mom, and the old man are contrasted individuals. Mom led a conventional suburban life while the old man who was a drunkard lived precariously down south." His identification with Lee is as obvious as Austin's with Mom.106(William Kleb.67).

The last scene opens later that morning with Austin (who has submitted willingly to the power and authority of lee) trying to take down Lee's chaotic dialogue on paper. Lee stalks back and forth in the kitchen shouting and complaining. Just at that moment Mom enters. Alaska was unsettling and she returned. At home, it is even more unsettling. In a daze she walks through the littered Kitchen and inspects the dead plants. The effect is chilling, the brothers react like kids about to be spunked. With a
paper-bag full of Mom's antique plates Lee heads for the door alone. Suddenly Austin grabs the telephone cord and strangles Lee from behind with the phone-cord around his neck, shouting "I can kill him, easily kill him, Right now, Right here" (True West. 58).

To the Mom it is worse then being homeless. She walks out of the kitchen and decides to check into a motel. The brothers continue to fight and they square off like wrestlers, as the curtain falls.

"As the rational, self-controlled Austin crumbles, the realistic surface of the play peels away. Henceforth objects become symbols, characters, archetype actions allegories" (William Kleb.120) writes William Kleb. True West is Sam Shepard’s most subjective and most personal play which lends itself to an immediate autobiographical and confessional reading. Yet it attains a higher level of signification. Sam Shepard was raised in a small farm in Southern California. His mother still lives in a suburb near Pasadena. Sam Shepard’s father remains obscurity, as Ellen Oumano testifies in her book Sam Shepard. His father has many things in common with the Old Man in the play. He is drunken, irresponsible, violent, leading a vagrant life in south-west. Austin’s ludicrous description of his patriarch as a toothless, drunken beggar staggering from one bar to another and
searching for the doggie bag of chop suey that contains his false teeth, is a true story, true of Sam Shepard's father.

Austin resembles Shepard in his physical appearance in his literary achievements and in his social status. Shepard lives up north in a suburb of San Francisco for the Pulitzer prize presumably brought him safely into the upper-middle class. In the past like Austin, Sam Shepard also had undergone several abortive, distasteful experiences as a fledgling screen-writer.

Shepard has no brother. Lee is also just as clearly based on Sam Shepard himself as is Austin "I've just divided one person into two"¹⁰⁹ (David J. De Rose.109) said Shepard in an interview. Austin says, "He (Saul Kimmer) things we're the same person"¹¹⁰ (True West.36). As C.G. Jung has stated, "We have a sinister and frightful brother, our own flesh and blood counterpart, who holds and maliciously hoardes everything that we would so willingly hide under the table"¹¹¹ (C.G. Jung.38).

All circumstances of Shepard's life have had to do with the flux-like, the temporary, the divisions and separations. Parental divorce, a constantly shifting home, a life-style that let him in and out of personal relationships have all gone into the shaping of his perceptions. Fragmentation becomes a fact of his social relations. It is hardly surprising
that he is generalising his experience as a social fact. In an interview in 1988 Shepard confessed,

What is most frightening to me right now is this estrangement from life...we're this incredible global race of strangers...people live together with somebody else, split, have kids—split. Then the kids never see each other. It is absolutely frightening—this incessant estrangement (Sessum Interview Magazine).

The last theatrical image in the play, the image of the brothers squaring off against each other, has a universal implication, that the doubleness of existence is permanent.

In *True West* Sam Shepard hints obliquely his own concept of creative art. Austin and Lee who are openly disdainful of each other and who follow two diametrically opposed life-styles represent two divergent different approaches to art and literature, the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Lee has vision. Austin has the skill and self-discipline. Shepard seems to think that the latter must serve the former. If Lee has the raw-material, Austin has the discipline and technique needed to harness that talent. Together they represent the opposing sides of Shepard's psyche as artist. Austin is associated with the crass and materialistic haven of the Hollywood. His play-writing is
"a little research and doing business. His only concern is whether he can get this thing off the ground". (*The West*.15)

Lee, the Dionysian, speaks of writing as "a little art", not as a little research. His attitude is more in the organic tradition of art as mystery. It is the sense of professionalism that distinguishes Austin, while it is the value of autonomy that prevails with Lee. Both brothers are writers in thrall to an industry that requires subordination of creative energy to the needs of business. Thus the play becomes a metaphor for the creative act, "a kind of sense and sensibility of the theatre"112(*C.W.E.Bigsby*.245). Austin's decision to accompany Lee to the west shows that he has apparently relocated the imaginative root force and is determined to return to the source.

Shepard is on familiar ground in *A Lie of the Mind*, dealing once again with the disintegration of the American family with the violence and mutability of sexual love. It is a tale of two families, one in California and the other in Montana, linked by the marriage of Jake and Beth. Beth is the central character of the play. She is an actress. Jake is, somehow, led to imagine that Beth is living a fantasy life with her scene partner. His imagination overtakes him and he tries to kill her. Because, to him the line between pretence and reality is blurred. The clouds of suspicion move away
and Jake eventually realises that Beth’s sexual transgression was nothing more than a lie of the mind, an imagined infidelity generated in the mind of Jake by jealousy. The event that triggers the action in the play is Jake’s cruel beating of his wife which sends him to his home, thinking he has killed Beth. Both homes are loveless. Jake’s father had long since walked out on his mother and died in a drunken accident. Beth’s mother is nothing more than a servant and burden to her husband, a Montana rancher who would prefer a deer to his wife and family. “Shepard is dramatising the lives of those who walk the vertiginous edge of experience. Again and again they walk off into the desert which will take them out of an anxious social content at the cost of annihilating their identity” (C.W.E. Bigsby. 189). Jake’s father and Beth’s father are men who fled from life shirking their responsibilities. The former had left the family long ago and lived alone in a trailer in Mexico until he died; while the latter spends all his time out in hunting. This is the central problem Shepard has always felt about his father. “He has been camped out” Like a “worm in the wood” his father is an implicit presence in A Lie of the Mind. Jake’s funeral monologue about his father’s death and the ritualistic disposal of his ashes in A Lie of the Mind do not allay his sorrow, instead these obsequies only intensify his urge for a connection with his father.
In *A Lie of the Mind*, Beth who is severely beaten about her head suffers from partial amnesia and aphasia. When she regains consciousness after a lot of medication, she has lost the use of her tongue. The vocal mechanism has become non-operative. She has lost command of the complexities of the spoken language. Shepard has also had the mischance to witness the effects of brain-damage and aphasia on some one who was very near and clear to him. In 1979, his wife O’ Lan’s mother, Scarlet Johnson Dark, suffered a stroke resulting in aphasia. Joseph Chaikin also had a similar experience, while undergoing an open-heart surgery, which seriously impaired his speech. The real life incident left Shepard with the first hand knowledge of a "perceptual dysfunction". In her biographical account of Ellen Oumano, she dwells upon all these untoward incidents in the life of Sam Shepard.

The play in its social front, leads to an examination and discussion of gender roles and male-females relations. Shepard is probing the wounds inflicted by men on women. "In their inability to fashion lasting commitments and to escape an inborn wildness and violence, the male characters cause pain and rend the fabric of family life" (Ron Mottram, 90), writers Ron Mottram in his essay on Sam Shepard's *A Lie
of the Mind. When Beth requests Frankie to pretend to be Jake, she wants him to be Jake with a difference. "Be soft with me Gentle like a woman-man".

In an acquisitive society like America, love, sometimes, is charged with the power and violence of the acquisitive drive. The sense of loneliness, the hunger for fulfilment and the search for identity become tangled with the urge for power resulting in complex rifts and divergence of objectives. In Cowboy Mouth, Slim loves Cavale but Cavale vacillates between her and his own family. Calve’s love for slim has an ulterior motive. She loves him not without reason. Cavale kidnaps slim off the street and domesticity to refashion him in her image of "a rock-and-roll-Jesus with a Cowboy Mouth". She sees in him the potential saviour of the rock-and-roll.

In Mad Dog Blues also the situation is not far different. Love struggles with other needs. Kosmo, a successful rock-star, dreams up a young man’s cliche fantasy of a sex goddess, who actually appears, and so he falls in love with Mac West. Kosmo, however, then discovers that he has many other things on his mind, such as revolutionary activity, his friendship with Yahoodi, his wife and child and of course, his music and his band, while Mac like Cavale in Cowboy Mouth, has her pre-occupation; She is interested only in money.
In Shepard's earliest production, there is only one play where the male-female relationship can be called "amiable", that is in *La Turista*, between Kent and Salem. In all other plays we see men acting in various negative ways towards young women. In *Melodrama Play* a rock-musician views his girlfriend Dana as his servant. In *Chicago Stu* is jealous of Joy who is leaving him. Male aggression and physical violence are depicted in *Buried Child*. Shelley the fiancee of Vince, who expected the family of Vince to be something "out of a Norman Rockwell illustration with turkey dinners and apple pie and all that kind a' stuff" is confronted by a radically different vision. She had to suffer insult, sexual slurs even from the patriarch of the family, Dodge. Bradley one of the elder brothers of Vince, who is a menacing amputee, asks Shelley to open her mouth and puts his fingers into her mouth. It is a vaguely sexual rite of domination upon her and also an obvious act of rape. No wonder, in utter despair and frustration she cries out "I am fucking terrified. I wanna go" (Sam Shepard.91).

In *Icarus's Mother*, Howard violently shakes Pat simply because he is angry at her for an outburst. In *A Lie of the Mind*, the very action of the play triggers off from Jake's beating of Beth. Meg, Beth's mother, says "men and women are two opposite animals".
"The female - the female on needs-the other But the male one - doesn't need the other, Not the same way (.................)

The male one goes off by himself. Leaves. He needs something else.

But he doesn't really know what he needs. So he ends up by dead. By himself"116 (*Sam Shepard. 77,78*).

Love and marriage in American society is not merely a frill to embroider the institutions of Chivalry. Romantic love looks to marriage as its fulfilment. Pouring so much into courtship and expecting so much of marriage, Americans find themselves frequently disillusioned in matrimony, a condition which leads them to frustration, violence and the resulting outcome of divorce. The probing of marriage failure in America has been intensive. The principal causes usually listed are the incompatible temperaments, loss of attraction for each other, infidelity, economic insecurity, and the resultant disharmony in the domestic set up.

Shepard as we have seen, has smashed the apparently water-tight divisions between the private and the public man. Anyone with a fondness for drama as biography could use his plays as a road-map which could explain his development as a playwright and his strong convictions and philosophy of composition as an artist in a society which is experiencing a moral and cultural revolution. The society, whose materialistic standards
place pre-eminence upon money and which looks upon art only as a
diversion, tangential to the really important things, offers the artist only
two options. The first option is to sacrifice his artistic principle and cater to
the consumerism of the society to garner sizeable rewards for himself. The
second is to follow his artistic credo and be a nobody before the public. In
olden days, the artist generally lived in a rather more clearly defined milieu
and had the decisive choices of subscribing to the current code, with today’s
immense and unresolved changes he finds it impossible to know precisely
what he should be for or against. As any sensitive modern, the author is
greatly uneasy at best and at worst blasphemously rails at just about
everything. The civilization seems to have run away with us and we are
swept along by forces and events too powerful for us to control. We live in
a world of bleak despair, nihilism, hollow values and futile lives. The artist
is apprehensive of such a world where the centrality of culture is lost, as
every thinker pursues a path different from that of his fellows. When he is
made to speak out he speaks about his own bruised soul and tormented
spirit and the agony caused by the socio-political and cultural compulsions
to which he is subjected in the post modern America.

Shepard’s artist heroes are Shaman-like figures found from the
folk-lore deposits left by the past and nourished by popular stories and
myths. They assert the life potential and rebel against the terror imposed by distorted values. Some of them are self portrayals, having his own vision. His vision is his awareness, his perspective, his good and bad dreams, his intoxication with life and his battles—battles with society, with himself and with the universe. Working through the personal to get to the general, he progresses only by maintaining intense consciousness of the world around him. Such awareness simultaneously goads him and acts as his weapon.

Shepard's Shaman-like artists have their vision arising out of a connectedness to heartland America. They confront the supernatural for the purposes of cure, clairvoyance, the finding of lost objects and the foretelling of future. In *The Mad Dog Blues* Shepard portrays the pursuit of the artist after the golden dream. A group of mythic characters Capt. Kidd, Jesse James, Paul Bunyan, Mae West Yahoodi and Cosmo, all rock-stars, go for a hunt of Capt. Kidd's buried treasure. (On its discovery the treasure turns out to be a bunch of bottle-caps). It is allegorically, the artist's pursuit of the "golden dream", the search for self, for innocence, for his roots. To Kosmo, "the famous Pop-artist" the quest is particularly meaningful, even though the treasure of gold he discovered was just a bunch of mocking bottle-caps. The quest opened his eyes to the shocking reality that the world of wealth did not exist, for the artist.
Rabbit in Angel City, is a Shaman, "a kind of magician" who has been summoned to help doctor a disaster movie. In the sophisticated apartment of Lanx, Rabbit is prevailed upon to shed all his creative talent in the movie making business. His artistic creations are now conditioned by the Culver City aesthetics. His imagination flags. In the confines of the consumerist culture Rabbit’s aspirations and self-indulgence cannot find fruition. The artist’s individuality is put at nought, he is reduced to a scapegoat. The city plagued with wealth, power and material comforts casts its irresistible spell over the artist. His medicine bundles are of no avail. "The look within-place" breeds only "a metaphysical zero at his bones". His attempts to invent a disaster movie powerful enough to stimulate the jaded sensibilities of the public miserably misfire. The Shamanistic qualities become lack-lustered. He is led into the vortex of the culver city. Thence forth he becomes ravenous, turns ambitious and finally succumbs to the "lure of the celluloid tape", as Shepard transferred himself for a time.

Niels in Suicide in B, like Rabbit, provides a key to the world of the contemporary artist, where he is exploited and made a victim. For Niles, who is a wizard of music sound was the only passion. "He was driven toward it in a way most men consider dangerous and suicidal. His production is
abundant, non stop. Endlessly winding through unheard-of before symphonies. Concertos beyond belief\(^{117}\) (*Suicide in B\(^b\).123*).

Art and artist are of a realm apart, which cannot stand too exasperating a domination of power or money. At the surface level *Suicide in B\(^b\)* is a play about the investigation of the murder of Niles the Jazzman - that is a story that is enshrouded in mystery. The police found a body in Nile's apartment, with the face completely blown off.

Niles was a wizard of music, where frenzy of creativity was Dionysian in its wildness. It looked as though he was possessed by his gift. There were plenty of Self-proclaimed protectors to take him on. He gives himself over to them willingly and caters to every demand they make. Once his thoughts are geared to their dogma, his demon begins to be tamed. His melody ceases to be the same divinely intoxicating elixir. It descends into the terrestrial plane, it becomes boring. The demon has left him. The artist is exclusively a private individual. His art is its own excuse for being. The unpremeditated strains of music are spun out of his inner self as a spider weaves its web. As Laureen, one of Nile's long-time collaborators remarks, "This music has no room for politics. It answers nobody. It plays by itself even when we're not playing it, even when we are not there to listen. It has no boss. Even when the boss is dead it keeps playing" (*Suicide in B\(^b\)*, 123).
Nile's suicide has been, probably an attempt on his part to liberate his art and artistic self by destroying his public persona is a well-known artist. His self, which has been shaped by the desire of other people he wanted to tear asunder. He wanted to stop laying into the hands of others, for ever. As David J. De Rose remarked his suicide is, "the only way to liberate the real self which has been inhabited and reshaped by other people's expectations and by his own adopted persons" (David J. De Rose. 86).

The experience of Niles is, to an extent, the dramatization of his own personal experience when he was picked on by Michaelangelo Antonioni, the Italian film producer to collaborate in script-writing for his Zabriskie Point, Shepard later spoke of this experience as a "disaster" for what Antonioni wanted was a political statement of the contemporary youth, with a lot of Marxist Jargon in it. Shepard could not do it. It was an attempt of the "cultural entrepreneurs" to kidnap him.

In Geography of a Horse-Dreamer is the projection of "the theme of talent and its exploitation". It is a work of art which deals with the personal dilemma of the artist himself. The play brings into focus the Mafia which manipulates the career of artists from behind the scene, driving their victims on mercilessly. Cody is a 'Cowboy from Wyoming' as he is described. He is
endowed with the special gift of dreaming the winners of horse-races before the horses are run. His Power of Clairvoyance proves to be disastrous as he was kidnapped by gangsters and held a prisoner by the syndicate boss Fingers. Cody's natural talent as a dreamer has faded because his native roots, "the cultural environment" which he calls 'geography' has been destroyed by isolation, coercion and their consequent displacement and relocation. Fingers does not understand that Cod's gift arises from his particular sensitivity to his environment. Dreaming a winner is a very delicate work. The pressure of the disruptive forces upon his consciousness makes him mad. The desperate gangsters who counted him as "a mine of gold" switch him over to dog-dreaming. Dog racing is the local part-time and eventually Cody's inner space becomes attuned to "the local frequency".

Under the yoke of a foreign system and its rules and assumptions, Cody ceases to be what he was formerly. He steadily moves toward a physical and mental break-down. Eventually, in behaviour he got transformed into a dog, whimpering surrying away from other characters and crushing into things and furniture like a frightened animal. 'His gifts are poison to him now because he has been forced to slavish creativity by commercial entrepreneurship. Torn by the conflict between dream and
power; talent and exploitation, Cody is an example for the artist who is institutionalised.

*Geography of a Horse-Dreamer* was written while Shepard was in England. He was visibly ill at ease there. The critic Ross Wetzesteon writes about the play subscribing to its allegorical implication, “I think of this kind of work as a translation play. Instead of translating the text from French, say, into English, the audience has to translate the plot into its meaning.”119 (Ross Wetzsteon.133).

Duke Durgens in *Melodrama Play* encounters a more literal entrapment. The play has for its hero a young performing, self-improvising artist, Duke Durgeons, whose very first song made a hit with the public. Actually, the song, “Prisoners, won’t you get up out a your home-made beds” was composed by Drake, Dure's brother. Duke recorded the song and sold it to Floyd - his Manager. Floyd is not worried about its authorship as long as it would bring him money. He orders his strong man Peter to guard Duke, Drake, Dana and Cisco until another hit is produced. Remaining in captivity under the Democlean threat neither Duke nor Drake can think of composing a song. They are smothered under the pressure of establishment and gangsterism. Floyd depersonalities Drake and Cisco by making them exchange their names.
As we read further into the play, the nature of the inescapable trap set for the artist and the authoritarian institutionalism with its square-in-saddle mentality become clearer. Peter—a thick-headed creature of the club keeps guard over the artists in *Melodrama Play*. Violence-prone Peter has just one question to be put to the victim for which he expects a truthful reply, “Now, what am I like when you look in my face?” *(Sam Shepard, 166).* It is a dangerous question, dangerous because a truthful answer would pretty soon end the artist’s business on earth. The artist in the authoritarian society lives under mortal threats. However, Drake answers the question evasively, stating “I like you very much”. *(which is farthest from the truth).* “I think you are a fairly nice guy” what the answer he first thought of. He jettisoned it because it is one of the ‘bull shit’ generalities. Anyone is a nice guy. In an institutionalised society the artist doesn’t want to risk his standing. The three part equation of economic security, public success and freedom of expression has become a myth in the world of the artist, ridden with commercialism and utilitarianism. The large, ‘eyeless’ photographs of Bob Dylan, King of rock-music; and of Robert Goulet, King of Crooners suggest the artist’s lack of vision. The artist is an ‘eyeless in Gaze’, manipulated and misguided by the Mafia, with or without consent. Rabbit Brown, Hoss, Cody, Duke, Durgen, Drake - are all
'futilitarian' figures isolated, victimised and exploited in a commercial culture which buys off, transforms and perverts the artists.

Art is supposed to hold a mirror up to nature; but dramatic art must also hold a mirror up to contemporary reality. Sam Shepard seems to share the conviction of Gertrude Stein, "that the business of art is to live in the actual present and to express that complete actual present" (Gary Grant 559). The New Historicists also believe that a literary text is "embedded in its context, as an interactive component within the new-work of institutions, beliefs and cultural power-relations, practices and products, that in their ensemble constitute what we call history" (M.H. Abrams 250). Hence they "construct" the textual meaning rather than 'discover' them ready-made. "All fiction, the very word confesses its exile from the truth, tries to express a truth by departing from it in some way" (John Whitman 1) says John Whitman. Allegory is the extreme case of this divergence. Allegory is outspokenly reticent, proclaiming that it has a secret. It has obliquity — obliquity that relies upon an assumed correspondence between 'the fiction' and 'the truth,' what the text 'says' and what it 'means'. When it comes to satire it is the artist's awareness of the gap between what is and what might be, the gap between the real and the ideal. For Sam Shepard, theatre is the home where he brings in the adventures of his life, his impressions of the
conditions of the society, the account of his inner experiences and sorts them out. He depicts the contemporary society and denounces its vices. Comedy and satire have almost the same sort of data. The aim of comedy is amusement where as the aim of satire is didactive.

The artist's imitation of nature is more than a copy of what is apparent to every eye, his imitation is in some measure a creation. The aim of the artist is not to produce a temporary emotional state but as the affective theory insists, it is to induce an emotional state that calls for an action. For example, the artist is so to stimulate in people an awareness of the horror of war that they would go out and do something about stopping war. In this regard the artist is a reformer.

Angel City is a satire on the film industry of Hollywood, which makes everyone live in a fantasy world. The Tooth of Crime is a powerful indictment against the power game in political structure. True West depicts the disintegration of the American family which sets aside mothers and fathers as unnecessary, comic, troublesome and insignificant. A Fool for Love speaks about the love that is pervasive, incestuous and trammelled up in hopeless infidelity, another marked feature of post-modern culture in America. The gender roles and male-female relations are looked into from closer quarters.
in *A Lie of the Mind*. Wife-beating husbands, neglected children, quarrelling brothers, long forgotten tenderness and barren households have become an everyday reality about the modern American homes. *States of Shock* lays bare before us the physical devastation and the emotional havoc wrought upon those who go to war. The masculine myth of war is exploded before us.

Shepard, as we have noticed, is not a single-issue writer. He is a social critic and a satirist with a multiplicity of interests. His is a crusade against all social and intellectual evil that appeared in the wake of industrialisation and consumerism. He is critical of the American wealth and its artefacts. A satirist is a guardian of ideals, a dreamer and a visionary. Shepard still dreams about going home again to a pastoral civilization of peace, harmony and contentment—a civilization with cowboys, gangsters, pop-singers, trance-dancers and faith-healing ceremonies. "After all, the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good humouredly" (J. Lahiri.28) stated Bernard Shaw in his *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. He is right! The satirist and the allegorist do take evil as something to be dealt with seriously.