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**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**  
**BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI**  
**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI**

**AMERICAN BUSINESS ETHIC IN DAVID MAMET’S**  
***GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS AND AMERICAN BUFFALO***

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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**T.C.**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**AMERICAN BUSINESS ETHIC IN DAVID MAMET’S**  
***GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS AND AMERICAN BUFFALO***

Master Thesis

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Bu tez ... / ... / 2009 tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından oy birliği ile kabul edilmiştir.

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Enstitü Müdürü  
Doç. Dr. Erdal AÇIKSES

*To my mother...*

## **ABSTRACT**

Master Thesis

### **American Business Ethic in David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo***

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The Institute Of Social Sciences

Department Of English Language and Literature

2009, Page: VII + 102

In general, the socio-cultural, political and economic transformations of the United States of America are historically conveyed and its contemporary state and overtones are revealed in the thesis. This thesis is basically focused on the analysis of American business ethic and anomie in two of David Mamet's 'business trilogy'; *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo*. It is put forward that how the socio-cultural merits and values turn out to be exploitable commodities in the free market mentality of the system, in the course of the character's struggle of survival in *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* which are designed as the microcosms of American capitalist system. Specifically, the anomic characters, in the labyrinth of the American business system, who are constantly oriented by the pressures of the American dream, are observed.

In the introduction chapter, the emergence of modern American drama in relation to the emergence of modern America in an historical context and David Mamet's distinguished place as a dramatist are revised. In Chapter I malpractices and aftermaths of the American business system as tragic imperatives on Mamet's characters are examined. In addition, the norms of survival in Mametian business world

and further ramifications are presented. In the second chapter, the very results of the ethics-lacking setting referring to the anomie theories of Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton, Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld are mentioned. Durkheim's thesis of 'insufficient normative regulation' of individuals' activities and social standards, Merton's deinstitutionalization, spring from the detachment/imbalance between 'culturally approved goals' and 'institutionally approved means of achieving these goals', and Messner's given socio-cultural panorama in which high crime rates are related to the excessive cultural emphasis on the American dream of financial gain, are used to explain the Mametian sense of anomie. In general, beyond the commodification of the socio-cultural values in the name of the business, in the thesis it is also aimed to reveal how this process itself and all its deviant extensions are normalized and justified by the characters. Both chapters are concerned with the conflicts and inapplicability of the norms of the American business system and its deleterious effects on individual and social terms. General deductions, obtained in the light of aforementioned theories and the presentation of American business world in Mamet's plays, are presented in the conclusion part.

**Key Words:** The United States of America, business, ethic, anomie, American Dream, David Mamet, American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross.

## ÖZET

### YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

#### **David Mamet'in *Glengarry Glen Ross* ve *American Buffalo* Oyunlarında Amerikan İş Etiği**

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Genel olarak, bu tezde Amerika'nın sosyo-kültürel, politik ve ekonomik dönüşümleri tarihsel olarak incelenmiş ve günümüzdeki durumu ve yansımaları açıklanmıştır. Temel olarak, David Mamet'in "iş üçlemesi" oyunlarının ikisi olan *Glengarry Glen Ross* ve *American Buffalo* adlı oyunlarında Amerikan iş etiği ve anominin analiz edilmesi üzerine odaklanılmıştır. Amerikan kapitalist sisteminin birer mikrokozmosu olarak tasarlanmış olan *American Buffalo* ve *Glengarry Glen Ross* oyunlarında, hayatta kalma savaşı sürecinde, sosyo-kültürel erdem ve değerlerin sistemin serbest pazar zihniyetiyle nasıl sömürülebilir metalara dönüştükleri ortaya koyulmuştur. Amerikan iş dünyası labirenti içinde sürekli olarak Amerikan rüyasının baskılarıyla yönlendirilen anomik karakterler gözlenmiştir.

Giriş bölümünde, modern Amerikan tiyatrosu, modern Amerika'nın doğuşu ve David Mamet'in oyun yazarı olarak seçkin yeri ile ilişkilendirilerek tarihsel bir bağlamda gözden geçirilmiştir. Birinci bölümde, Amerikan iş sisteminin yanlış uygulamaları ve Mamet'in karakterleri üzerinde trajik emirler olarak ortaya çıkan olumsuz sonuçları incelenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, Mamet'e özgü iş dünyasında hayatta kalma normları ve bunların olumsuz sonuçları sunulmuştur. İkinci bölümde, Emile

Durkheim, Robert Merton, Steven F. Messner ve Richard Rosenfeld'in anomi teorilerine dayanarak, etik-yoksunluğunun birebir sonuçlarına değinilmiştir. Durkheim'ın bireysel etkinliklerin ve toplumsal ölçütleri n 'yetersiz normatif düzenlenmesi' tezi, Merton'un, 'kültürel olarak onaylanan amaçlar' ve 'bu amaçlara ulaşmada kurumsal olarak onaylanan araçlar' arasındaki ayrılık/dengesizlikten kaynaklanan, 'kurumsuzlaştırma' kavramı, ve Messner'in yüksek suç oranları ile maddi kazanç olarak Amerikan rüyasına yapılan aşırı kültürel vurgu arasındaki ilişkiyi sunduğu sosyokültürel panoraması, Mamet'e özgü anomi anlayışını açıklamak için kullanılmıştır. Genel olarak, iş dünyası adına sosyo -kültürel değerlerin metalaştırılmasının ötesinde, tezde bu sürecin kendisinin ve bütün çarpık uzantılarının karakterler tarafından nasıl meşrulaştırıldığı ve normalleştirildiği açıklanmıştır. Her iki bölümde de, Amerikan iş sistemi normlarının yıkıcı etkileri, bireysel ve toplumsal çelişkileri ve uygulanamazlığına yer verilmiştir. Sonuç bölümünde, yukarıda bahsedilen teoriler ve Mamet'in oyunlarında sunduğu Amerikan iş dünyası panoraması ışığında elde edilen genel çıkarımlar sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, İş Dünyası, Etik, Anomi, Amerikan Rüyası, David Mamet, American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross



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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

### EMERGENCE OF MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA

Before accounting the Modern American drama, it will be convenient to revise the very origins and socio-economical and cultural dynamics from which it has mounted. Modern approaches to the history of American drama generally refer to its interaction with Native American roots. Emergence and the history of drama in America is generally bound up with that of in England although it is also known that it takes its roots from Native- American rituals performed by the Indian Americans. However, reasons may vary from establishing security to religious missionary facilities, intercultural exchange between Natives and the settlers and triggering effect of this exchange on the birth of the theatre cannot be denied.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is also true that theatrical activities in the New World are generated by the English and European players and playhouses. There is much ambiguity on the exact date of the outset of American theatre. Don B. Wilmethe informs that “A nonexistent piece called *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb*, the first recorded play in English presented in the colonies, was written by one William Darby of Accomac Country, VA, and performed in 1665 by Darby, Cornelius Wilkinson, and Philip Howard in Cowles Tavern, though this is the last recorded performance in Virginia until 1702.”<sup>2</sup> The location of the first play, Virginia, is worthy to be noted in terms of regional diversities in American theatre. Southern colonies were more favorable to theatrical activities yet cities as Salem, Boston, Andover, and Dedham were more conservative towards novelties. The first American theatre was constructed in 1718, in Williamsburg in Virginia however, Boston as a center of Puritanism, could not enjoy theatrical activities until 1792.

17<sup>th</sup> century American theatre came into existence hesitantly under the sword of Puritanical spirit. Puritanism, imported from English forefathers, encouraged Americans to think themselves as having special mission in human history. Early in the 17th century, a group of Puritans from the Church of England migrated to New Land. Puritan

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<sup>1</sup> For the intercultural exchange between European settlers and Native Americans, see Don B. Wilmethe and C. W. E. Bigsby, *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: Volume 1, Beginnings to 1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.113.

<sup>2</sup> Don B. Wilmethe and Tice L. Miller, *Cambridge Guide to American Theatre*, Second Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 2.

pioneers came with their strong religious norms and they believed an Augustinian like doctrine, which refers to human beings as 'sinners'. As their name stands for, Puritans aimed to 'purify' the self and the society as well. The message of Puritanism placed a strong emphasis on the belief that Puritans are not only supposed to be concerned with salvation but also responsible for purifying the world from the 'evil'. So, American Puritanism principally stood against human beings' 'devilish taste for arts'. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials* can be seen as examples of their struggle against the evil. Therefore, theatrical activities were objected by Puritans on the grounds that indulging in such activities stole from the time of praying and gave way to corruption. Moreover, Puritans' prejudice against theatre depended on the anxieties of emptying the churches and perpetuating pagan customs. Theological and moral objections to theatrical activities can be seen in the strict acts of the given period. In 1750, the General Court of Massachusetts passed an act prohibiting stage plays and theatrical entertainments of any kind. On May 31, 1759, the House of Representatives in the Colony of Pennsylvania enacted a law forbidding the acting of plays. In 1761, in Rhode Island "an act to Prevent Stage Plays and other Theatrical Entertainments within the Colony," was released. The following year, the New Hampshire House of Representatives rejected a proposal of exhibiting 'plays and theatrical entertainments in the town of Portsmouth' by declaring that: "...Because, when such entertainments are a novelty, they have a peculiar influence on the minds of young people, greatly endanger their morals, by giving them a turn for intriguing, amusement and pleasure."<sup>3</sup> Assembly's address to prevent acting plays claimed that entertainments of the stage would inflame the temper of prevailing tendency towards pleasure and idleness. Another instance that verbalizes general attitude of the era towards theatre can be found in the Yale President Timothy Dwight's "An Essay on the Stage" (1824). In the essay, he declares that "...to indulge a taste for playgoing means nothing more or less than the loss of that most valuable treasure the immortal soul."<sup>4</sup> Governors and leaders of the contemporary society opposed to the theatre on so-called religious and moral grounds. Religious intolerance, sparseness of the population, sufferings of pioneers that estrange them from leisure and regional diversities in interests and tastes are the impediments that newly born American theatre

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<sup>3</sup> John Farmer, Nathaniel Bouton, Isaac Hill, *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, Volume V, U.S.A: Asa McFarland, 1837, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> Qtd in Paul Kuritz, *The Making of Theatre History*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p.240.

had to face. Pioneers had to encounter various hardships like learning how to grow crops, how to sustain their colonies in the harsh winters and how to struggle with the Native Americans. As it is known, many new settlers died of starvation and disease. These hindrances worked against the development of art in general and struggling for existence in a totally unfamiliar geography preponderated the other activities. What's more, it is dramatically important to note that American theatre had no historical background or tradition of its own. Consequently, afore mentioned specific characteristics of the land obstructed the progress of professional theatrical activities.

Although it was not acted, the first drama written and printed in America is the satirical farce, *Androborus* (the man eater) of Governor Richard Hunter in 1714, in New York. As the writer of the play is an Englishman, the play bears some characteristics of English political satire. 23 May, 1761, the date of the performance of *An Exercise Containing a Dialogue and Ode Sacred to the Memory of his Late Gracious Majesty, George II* at the public commencement in the College of Philadelphia, is another important year in the history of American theatre. Besides the se college activities, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, professional theatre performances were cultivated with the arrival of Lewis Hallam and his company. The Hallams 'Company of Comedians from London' arrived in Williamsburg in 1752. Lewis Hallam was an Anglo-American actor and manager of the first professional theatre company in the United States. In his first theatre house, built in 1753 in New York, he presented Elizabethan and Restoration dramas, farces, and operettas. With the coming of the Hallams, the first play by an American author to be professionally produced in America, *The Prince of Parthia* of Thomas Godfrey (1736-1763), appeared on stage. It is noteworthy that *The Prince of Parthia* as a romantic tragedy had an important influence on the forthcoming outputs of the literary drama. By the early eighteenth century, since the settlers were from England -especially famous actors and companies in the search of new audiences -, theatre of the New Land started to be dominated by that of England. Genres and the subject matters were imitations of English theatre. American theatre was generated with the works of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Oliver Goldsmith, and other eminent playwrights of classical English theatre. Specifically, the first play presented by a fully professional company was Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Presentation of a British play by

a company of British actors on 15 September 1752 in Williamsburg <sup>5</sup>(Don,p.1) illustrates the British influence on American Theatre. Although unwelcomed by Puritans, those British performers found implementing theatrical activities profitable

As it is widely accepted, the Revolution (1775 -1783) was the most influential event in the history of America that reshaped the tastes and the interests of the audiences. American Revolution or the American War of Independence ended with the Declaration of Independence in 1783. Republicanism of the political arena, similar to that of conservative Right Whigs of England or prejudice of Puritans and Quakers, had a great delaying impact on theatrical activities since it was also founded by the prominent Puritans. It was such an interesting era that besides melodramas and tragedies, even Gothicism was condemned because according to the Puritans it was hard to understand. The *Castle Spectre* by Matthew Gregory Lewis and *Blue Beard* by George Coleman the Younger were among the most popular American gothic plays. However, sanctions of Puritanism gradually began to lose its absolute impact because Puritanism, as a doctrine of restriction, rejected the needs of human nature in the face of newly coming industrialization and failed to adapt itself to the new philosophical and scientific attitudes. The more Puritanism lost its strength, the more theatre gained power. During the Revolutionary Period, a number of political satires were written: *Adulateur* (1773) and *The Group* (1775), by Mrs. Mercy Warren of Boston, *The Fall of British Tyranny* (1776) by John Leacock, and the anonymous farce *The Blockheads* (1776). The beginning of American comedy is thought to be marked by Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, 1787. Another historically important name of theatre is William Dunlap who wrote in variety of forms such as tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, opera and interlude. Dunlap's first play *The Father*, acted in New York on 7 September 1789, was written in the vein of comedy of manners.

Election of Thomas Jefferson (1743 -1826) as president in 1800 changed the face of Republicanism towards a more popular and tolerant one, on the other hand republican nationalism enforced the patriotism in drama and literature in general sense. By the 1800, theatre freed itself from the monopolization of the elite and turned out to be a popular entertainment. John Howard Payne's domestic melodramas touched the

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<sup>5</sup> Don B. Wilmeth and C. W. E Bigsby, *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: Volume 1, Beginnings to 1870*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 1.

very essence of the everyday life of common citizens. *Clari, The Maid of Milan* (1823) was the opera of the song 'Home Sweet Home'. His contemporary James N. Barker of Philadelphia was a prolific dramatist who focused on the native materials as subject matters. His play *The Indian Princess* (1808) was based on the story of Captain John Smith and the Indian princess, Pocahontas. His first play, *Tears and Smiles*, produced in 1807 was thought to be written in the vein of earlier comedies as *The Contrast*. His play *Marmion* (1812), acted in 1848, and presented the American attitude towards England. Robert Montgomery, Bird of Philadelphia, who was also known as a novelist, penned some important plays like *The Gladiator* (1831), *Oralloosa* (1832) and *Broker of Bogota* (1834). Another talented writer of Philadelphia was George Henry Boker, whose first tragedy *Calaynos* was performed in Philadelphia in 1851. His second tragedy, *Leonor de Guzman*, was produced in 1853. *Francesca Da Rimini* (1855) was considered to be one of his best romantic dramas. In addition to the regional drama, James Nelson Barker's *Superstition* (1824) and R. P. Smith's *William Penn* (1829) were noteworthy plays of the era. Growth of 19<sup>th</sup> century American theatre was parallel to the growth of the nation; for example plays about evils of drink and slavery were famous. P.T. Barnum's production of *The Drunkard* and dramatization of Harriet Stowe Beecher's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, dealing with the immorality of slavery, had hundred performances.

As it is commonly acknowledged, socio-cultural and economic matrix of a society naturally produces its collective consciousness that is further embedded in artistic presentations. The outbreak of American Civil War (1861) had a profound disrupting effect on theatre, though plays with patriotic themes such as Charles Gayler's *Bull Run; or, the Sacking of Fairfax Courthouse* (1861) were still dominant on stage. Louis Morton Hacker states;

“...industrial capitalism, it became apparent by the late 1850's, was incapable of achieving full maturity unless it had control of the state. In these terms we are to read the meaning of the Civil War; for that conflict was a revolution in the sense that it represented a desperate struggle for political power between two classes each of which required control of the state to underwrite its own economic and social programs.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Louis Morton Hacker, *The Triumph of American Capitalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1947, p.200.

As he signifies, meaning of the Civil War for the American history had to be read carefully. The four-year war between the South – where slavery was seen as a must - and the North – where abolitionism was favored - had threshold effects on the forthcoming periods. Before the war, early facilities of Industrial Revolutions started to feel itself in economic life in North, however, dominant feudal structure of South prevent its engagement in those activities. Although differentiation in socio -economic and cultural terms took its roots from pre-war period during the war, the North and the South significantly fell apart. Since the whole war took place there, the South became economically devastated after the war. On the contrary, for the North, post -war period was a time of economic recovery. “South who defeated by Civil War would soon be defeated by industrialization.”<sup>7</sup>

Post Civil War era was one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the United States. The years between 1865 and 1877 were considered as *The Reconstruction Era* when America determined to abolish slavery, reconstruct the nation and the Constitution. It is noteworthy that the end of the Civil War welcomed the coming of industrialization. Commercialization of agriculture, urbanization and industrialization energetically went on to transform the nation with the Reconstruction legislatures. Accelerated technological innovations, applied science, growth of large enterprises, rapid increase in population, increase in the work force, growth of accumulation of capital for investment, progress in nationwide transportation, annexation of new cities were the key factors that stimulate American industrialization. It is stated in **A People and A Nation** that in 1859, Great Atlantic Tea Company, nation’s first chain store, was founded; in 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act gave states public lands to finance agricultural and industrial colleges; in 1869 First transcontinental railroad, The Union Pacific, was completed; in 1878 Timber and Stone Act allowed large companies to possess large tracts of forest land; in 1883 National time Zone was adopted.<sup>8</sup> The period following Reconstruction, 1878-1889, was called as “Gilded Age” due to the economic affluence. Gilded Age generally stands for the transformation of an agrarian society to an industrialized one. In this age, analogous to

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<sup>7</sup> F. Gül Koçsoy, *Katherine Anne Porter’in Kısa Öykülerinde Başarısızlık Teması* , Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1993, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Beth Norton and David M. Katzman eds., *A People and A Nation, A History of the United States*, Fourth Edition, U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994, p.501.



these developments, new consumer society filled with absolutely different expectations and necessities was emerged.

Although James Watt invented the steam engine in 1763, America had to wait until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the transformative effects of the Industrial Revolution. With the outburst of the Industrial Revolution, A drastic change from hand made items to machine manufactured and mass produced goods was seen. Mass production naturally engendered its own conditions. The poor migrated from their villages in order to work in the factories of the rich, therefore, peasants of the feudality turned out to be the workers and they had to accommodate with this new economic scheme. As a result of this immigration wave, new crowded and unhealthy allocation units where hundreds of newly arrived immigrants from rural areas and overseas had to survive were founded near factories. In the course of immigration and accommodation to new urban life, families were disrupted; workers were subjected to harsh living conditions. Due to the immigration movement, demand for work increased, in turn the wages decreased. As the cities grew with the industrialization, a new urban culture with its own opportunity and misery came into existence. Increases in immigration, consumption, labor conflicts and inequality were some of these conditions. Revolution in transportation together with a variety of institutional developments enforced commercialism and American society became drastically more diverse than ever before. By the Revolution, newborn capitalism and a new class of wealthy industrialists and a prosperous middle class emerged together with the everlasting clash between working classes and middle and upper classes. Bourgeoisie which was devoid of any prestigious historical background, education and nobility tried hard to accommodate to the upper class. Members of this class, who were in the search of establishing upper class virtues, lived comfortably in their splendiferous houses with servants. Despite the lack of historical background, financial security of this class enabled them to access higher levels of education, raise a family with all material possessions and enjoy the personal opportunities of their time. Towards the end of the nineteenth century 'modern America' was considered to be country of "...large-scale industry and advanced technology, densely inhabited urban areas, concentrations of capital in banks, business,

and a heterogeneous population of diverse races, classes, and ethnic groups.”<sup>9</sup> Revolution came to the United States not only along with its better opportunities but also along with destituting conflicts. Poverty, guilt and corruption noticeably increased due to the crowd and squalor of the cities. Women and children heavily worked in manufacture as a cheap labour force on the other hand women in poorer cities were subjected to work as prostitutes in order to survive.

Significantly different experience in social hierarchy naturally showed itself in the sense of art as well. Class discrimination reverberated in the diversification of theatrical activities in terms of distinctive tastes of these classes. It is worth to mention that class consciousness called forth an instinct towards molding distinctive identities’ of the classes in the arts. While some plays such as *Metamora*, *The Gladiator*, and *Jack Cade*, *The Carpenter of Rouen*, *A Glance at New York* drew workers with their class-solidarity values, some plays such as Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Broker of Bogota* (1834), Nathaniel Parker Willis's *Tortosa*, *The Usurer* (1839), and George Henry Boker's *Francesca da Rimini* (1855) embraced the values of early industrial capitalism. One of the bloodiest disputes in New York, the Astor Place Riot of 1849 can be taken as an outburst of class segregation in theatre history. The rivalry between two Shakespearean actors, American star Edwin Forrest who appealed to working class and British tragedian William Macready who appealed to the upper class, was seen as the reason of the riot which ended with the death of 22 people. After the riot, entertainment in New York was separated into highbrow and working class lines. Robert W. Synder states that “After the Astor Place Riot of 1849 entertainment in New York City was divided along class lines: opera was chiefly for the upper middle and upper classes, minstrel shows and melodramas for the middle class, variety shows in concert saloons for men of the working class and the slumming middle class.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, evaluating the Astor Place Riot as the struggle between Forrest and Macready would be inadequate unless the struggle and ideological conflict between their audiences is taken into account in terms of class tensions.

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Lauter ed., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Volume Two, Second Edition, Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 1226.

When the business practices started in the country, unfair business practices began concurrently. Businessmen, financiers and bankers of enormous personal wealth justified unethical and illegal business practices for the sake of their own profit. That's why frontier entrepreneurs of the age, Corneillus Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were called 'Robber Barons'. These 'Robber Barons' enthusiastically absorbed Social Darwinism, developed by English philosopher Herbert Spencer which is the application of Charles Darwin's theory of the evolutionary 'survival of the fittest' into laissez faire economy. Darwinian worldview puts forward that in the natural cycle of biological evolution 'favourable variations' are preserved yet 'unfavourable variations' are rejected. American entrepreneurs claimed that government should not interfere in economic affairs. In this sense, 'unfavourable' enterprises, that were weak, would destined to extinct for the benefit of advancement. Moreover, for the working class, ones who are unable to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of labor would be eliminated. Early capitalists of America enthusiastically embraced the idea of 'the survival of the fittest'. John D. Rockefeller himself stated that the "...growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest . . . the working out of a law of nature . . ."<sup>11</sup> By supporting Social Darwinism, Rockefeller tried to validate his ruthless laissez-faire economic outlook. As another mouthpiece of capitalism in the land, Steel King Andrew Carnegie's comments are worth to be mentioned:

“...while the law (of competition) may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it ensures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment; the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential to the future progress of the race.”<sup>12</sup>

The 'law(s) of competition' which were constantly reoriented and modified as befitting to the private interest of the individuals were merely the laws of jungle. This scientific but detached approach to humanity formed the very core of the American business ethic. Gilded Age was a time of consumption evoked by previously mentioned greedy capitalists. Excessive emphasis on consumerism led to a sharp breakdown in spiritual

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<sup>11</sup> William Ghent, *Our Benevolent Feudalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1902, p.29.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Spindler, *Veblen and Modern America: Revolutionary Iconoclasm*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p.16.

values. From now on, the criteria of happiness started to be measured by the amount of one's goods. Abundance of material goods ceases the tragedy of erosion in spiritual values in human mind.

These transformations naturally touch the very quint essence of the drama. Post-Civil War era with its capitalist outputs gave way to changes in the arts as well. Literature which was still under the effect of European literature began to discharge the influence of romanticism at the turn of the century. Specifically for the American drama, even the ones that rejected and reacted against the verified norms, declared themselves through the means of the era. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America experienced a sharp break from the past, so did American drama. In a broader sense, sociopolitical, intellectual and economic existence of America as a whole started to be determined by that newly emergent mode of the production from this period on. At the turn of the century, with the developments in technology and science, dramatic changes in terms of economy and demography threw many traditional values into question. Previously accepted 'Victorian' code lost its effect on socio-cultural existence. Victorian Period was full of contradictions and restrictions. Furthermore, dissents of 19<sup>th</sup> century America such as industrialization, urbanization, increasing immigration and corruption in political and economical fields previously formed the basis of thirst towards acceptance of this brand-new era. This disparate era is greeted by interestingly miscellaneous responses. Greeting of Henry Adams is considered to be one of the most relevant prologues:

“The child born in 1900 would, then, be born into a new world which would not be a unity but a multiple....he found himself in a land where no one had ever penetrated before; where order was an accidental relation obnoxious to nature; artificial compulsion imposed on motion; against which every free energy of the universe revolted; and which, being merely occasional, resolved itself back into anarchy at last.”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout this excerpt taken from his book entitled **The Education of Henry Adams**, Adams not only draws a sharp distinction between these two centuries of America, but also vociferates that 'nothing will be the same again'. In his autobiographical description of 'modern' society, Adams puts forward that "...chaos was the law of

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<sup>13</sup> Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918, p. 449.

nature; order was the dream of man....”<sup>14</sup> This paradoxical relation between chaos and order started to pervade the nation’s collective identity. Moreover, it has constantly haunted the minds of the individuals and the nation as a whole since then. James announces that disorder in America is against the natural mechanism of the universe so leads to “anarchy”.

At the turn of the century, plays in the vein of melodrama, comedy of manners, purpose and problem plays were replaced by early realist plays. Realism which is defined as the portrayal of life with fidelity turned out to be a new trend then. Realism as a revolt against melodramatic expression and exaggerated theatricalism is defined as a French originated movement which goes back to 1830s. Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828 - 1906), as a key figure in Realism, influenced 20th century dramatists. Previously stated conditions of the country naturally postponed the arrival of Realism in America. In addition to these specific conditions, lack of realistic stage, realistic acting and audience adopting realist point of view can be counted among those delaying effects. That’s why realism of European drama started in 1870s and 1880s, could only reach America as late as 1910s. However, there were some early plays that bear realist aspects in terms of reflecting American realities at that time. Steele MacKaye’s *Hazel Kirke* (1880) is considered as a ‘domestic drama (that) had a quality of quiet naturalness’. His play *Margaret Fleming* (1890) dealt with the American woman. *The Reverend Griffith Davenport* was a play about slavery. William Vaughn Moody’s *The Great Divide* (1906), dealt with the contrast between East and West, is thought to be a threshold in progress of Realism. Bronson Croker Howard (1842 -1908) was another eminent dramatist of the era who changed the face of theatre with his innovative approach in style and subject matter. Realist subject matters about life in America, American business, marriage and women are employed in plays such as *The Banker's Daughter* (1878), *Young Mrs. Winthrop* (1882) and *The Henrietta* (1887). William Dean Howells (1837-1920), the realist novelist, was an important figure on the path of American Realism with his assertions in **Criticism and Fiction** (1894). The First Independent Theatre Association was established by Howells and a group of cultural leaders in order ‘to encourage truth and progress in American Dramatic Art’. In accordance with the socio-cultural changes, Clyde Fitch (1865-1909), as a writer of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 449.

popular melodramas such as *The Girl with Green Eyes* (1902), *The Woman in Case* (1905) and writer of *Truth* (1907) presented an episodic picture of modern industrialized world. Fitch's melodramas are taught to link the traditional American romantic melodrama with social realism. Greater number of plays addressed to social reality, *Paul Kauvar* by Steele Mackay, *The Lion and the Mouse* by Charles Klein and *The Nigger* (1909) by Edward Sheldon. His play *The Boss* (1911) gives a panorama of the American business at the turn of the century. On the path to the modern American drama, David Belasco (1853-1931) as an innovator producer and playwright gave his color of realism although some of his plays are considered as romantic melodramas. Rachel Crother is a woman playwright and director who was against Victorian codes of 'true womanhood'. Women writers were impressed by feminism in Europe and took their subject matters and styles from their European feminist contemporaries. Yet the greatest contribution to the birth of American realism can be mostly attributed to Provincetown Players (1916) or Playwright's Theatre -which promoted Eugene O'Neill- the Drama Society (1909), The Macdowell Clup, Drama League (1910) and Washington Square Players (1915). These were the first promoters of modern American drama in the early twentieth century. They were not content with the established forms of American theatre experience and eager to experiment in various forms in accordance with those of European contemporaries.

Rapid economic transformations in the 'Progressive Era' (1910s) directly influenced the American theatre experience. The age underwent a dramatic change of a society from being rural to urban and dramatic increase in gross national product and labour force. One of the most effective hallmarks of Progressive Era is certainly 'pragmatism' which is inherited from 'utilitarianism' presented by British philosopher John Stuart Mill and American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce's *The Fixation of Belief* (1877) and *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (1878). As an influential American philosopher and representative of American thought, William James was the first person who asked the key question of pragmatism; 'What would be better for us to believe!' Furthermore, James gave answer to this question as such: "...what is better for us to believe is true unless the belief incidently clashes with some other vital benefits ."<sup>15</sup> Everything that is considered as "better" and functional for individual is blessed by the

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<sup>15</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914, p.76

pragmatist idea. Pragmatism as an American doctrine rebelled against idealism and absolutism; convinced American people to pursue practical interests and needs in terms of self-help based individualism. Since the citizens of America had no common roots, pragmatist theories that blessed individualism were quickly absorbed in.

By the early decades of twentieth-century, the holy motto of America, *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (A new order of the ages) was at work to put the world in order; an order out of chaos. In August 1914, the outbreak of the World War I in Europe was at first replied by 'neutrality' as a traditional U.S policy. However, 1917 was the highest time of performing 'crusading zeal' and the holy his torical mission of bringing order and peace to the world. Ironically enough, scale of destruction of the war 'to end all wars' was huge. Although it is widespread to say that America emerged from the war as a major power, following commentary must not be u nderestimated:

“For the generation that lived through the First World War, the glory of saving civilization from the Germans dissolved into the tragedy of human hurt. For many Americans who heeded President Woodrow Wilson’s call to “make the world safe for democracy,” the war’s results seemed more a national disaster than an ennobling experiment.”<sup>16</sup>

Dimension of this 'national disaster' was so enormous that total loss of life reached up to 8 million soldiers; 6.6 million civilians and 21.3 mill ion people were wounded for the sake of predetermined 'holy' policies. Disrupted and economically hobbled atmosphere after the war was turned that eager 'crusade' into disillusionment. On the eve of the war, American citizens idealized themselves as romant ic heroes on the grounds that they have holy missions to save their country, encouraged with heroic ideals. However, when the heroes returned to their homeland, they could not find the America they had left. They found out that worldly affairs such as purs uing personal wealth and happiness overcame previous patriotic ideals. Disillusionment as a collective trauma manifested itself through totally diverse inclinations; some citizens stood for nationalism while others stood against it. America waged war not o nly against foreign enemies but also against inner ones. The concept of “Americanization” alienated whoever refused to participate in that crusade. Espionage (1917) and Sedition Act (1918), Red Scare, Labor Strikes (1919), revival of Klux Klu Klan, %100 Americanism characterized the

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Beth Norton and David M. Katzman eds., *A People and A Nation, A History of the United States*, Fourth Edition, U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994, p. 685 –686.

political, socio-cultural and economic corpus of the period immediately after war. “...More than two thousand people were prosecuted under the acts and many others were intimidated into silence.”<sup>17</sup> These people were pacifists from all walks of life, anti-war critics, intellectuals, radicals, socialists, workers, immigrants, women and so forth, namely anyone who is ‘disloyal or abusive’ to the Constitution. Despite the tragedy of War, establishment of economic dominance in the world with a globalizing industry and international power politics of economic interests were fostered in war-time. Aim of making the world safe for democracy failed, but a new course of economic expansion and the role as ‘superpower’ started to be performed on the world stage. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs expanded the regulatory power of the federal government and the government's role in the economy. In cultural terms, the stability of family life and traditional morality norms broke down.

Disillusionment following World War I has shaped the general tendency of “roaring twenties”. The idea of collectiveness and solidarity unavoidably diminished into mere individualism. It was a time of pursuing personal wealth and happiness. Ironically, a classical wartime hysteria fostered patriotism and alienation on one hand, prosperity and deprivation on the other hand. Freedom in life styles strongly clashed with the pious Puritan norms of the country. Traditional way of existence is dramatically altered with the new schemes. It can be said that this era saw the coexistence of fundamentalism and modernism. That’s why 1920s are often labeled as the decade of contrasts and conflicts. The America of twenties was so contrasting that sympathy towards Bolshevism after the success of Russian Revolution and sympathy towards nativist Ku Klux Klan were welcomed concurrently.

Decades testified the flourish of the socio-economic and intellectual foundations of modern life with a sharp detachment from ‘outmoded’ Victorian system of belief. This transformation noticeably echoed through the literary outputs of the epoch. Themes such as loss of personal, moral and spiritual values (Thomas Sterns Eliot), the fall of the ‘American dream’ (F. Scott Fitzgerald), ‘the lost generation’ (Ernest Hemingway), moral decadence of the Old South (William Faulkner), black life in a black community (Zora Neale Hurston), ‘American Tragedy’ (Theodore Dreiser) reflected the atmosphere of the contemporary America in the novels. Social

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.706.



consciousness found its place on the stage as well. Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings's *What Price Glory* (1924) was inspired by First World War and referred it in realistic terms. Maxwell Anderson went on to deal with the social anxieties in his play *Gods of the Lightning* (1928) that presented the Sacco and Vanzetti murder case. As one of the founders of the Playwright's Theatre, a significant woman of American stage Susan Glaspell's (1876-1948) plays *Trifles* (1916), *Close the Book* (1917), *The Outside* (1917), *Bernice* (1919), *Inheritors* (1921) and *The Verge* (1921) brought a new voice to drama of the twenties by means of combining 'European expressionism and American realism'.

The theatrical arena of 1920s and 1930s flourished with the coming of Eugene O'Neill's (1886-1953) mastery. As the first American to be honored with the Nobel Prize for his great contributions to American drama, O'Neill changed the landscape of the American stage with his masterpieces in twenties and thirties. *The Emperor Jones* (1921), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *Anna Christie* (1922; Pulitzer Prize), *Desire Under the Elms* (1925), *The Great God Brown* (1926), and *Strange Interlude* (1928; Pulitzer Prize), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), *Ah! Wilderness* (1933) deserved to be praised. O'Neill, together with his contemporaries John Howard Lawson, Elmer Rice, John Dos Passos and Marc Connelly and George Kaufman, stood against conventional drama. 1936 was the year when Robert Emmet Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight* – dealt with the meaninglessness of war – won Pulitzer Prize. Elmer Rice (1892-1967) like O'Neill experimented on various dramatic modes. His expressionistic play *Adding Machine* (1923) presents rage against machine age. A highly realistic and Pulitzer winning play, *Street Scene* (1929) set outside a New York City slum tenement building gives down-to-earth chronicle of life in the slums. Polemical play, *We, the People* (1933) was greatly inspired by the Great Depression and expresses his social and political outlook as in *Counsellor-at-Law* (1931) and *Between Two Worlds* (1934).

The great Russian actor, director and theorist Constantin Stanislavsky has had a profound influence on the American theatre with his famous 'method' of acting. His system of acting rebelled against the melodramatic and artificial acting. Moscow Art Theater, Russian repertory company founded in 1897 by Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, came to America with three plays *The Lower Depths*, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

American drama critic, director and one of the three original founders of the New York City's Group Theater, Harold Clurman; an Academy Award-nominated Jewish-American director, actor, producer and acting teacher Lee Strassberg; film and theatre director, producer, screenwriter, novelist and cofounder of the influential Actors Studio in New York in 1947 Elia Kazan ( as İlyas Kazancıoğlu in Turkish) and American actor and acting coach known with the Meisner Technique, Sanford Meisner influenced by Moscow Art Theatre and Stanislavsky and reshaped the stage with their unorthodox, distinguished and effective styles. Expressionism that rejected traditional methods of representing objective reality by expressing subjective feelings and emotions, was welcomed by the dramatists and gave rise to a new theatrical approach. For O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape* are regarded as prominent examples of expressionist drama. However, O'Neill was not solely expressionist; it is known that he peerlessly experimented with various genres. O'Neill himself declared the very nature of his attitude towards play-writing:

“I intend to use whatever I can make my own, to write about anything under the sun in any manner that fits or can be invented to fit the subject. And I shall never be influenced by any consideration but one: Is it the truth as I know it – or better still, feel it? If so, shoot, and let the splinters fly where they may. If not, not.”<sup>18</sup>

Modern American dramatic aesthetic, which took place in the first three decades of twentieth century, came with the brilliant combinations of various dramatic forms. The strikest revolution came on stage with the distinguished plays of Eugene O'Neill, E.E. Cummings (1894 – 1962), Arthur Miller (1915-2005), Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) and William Inge. Thornton Wilder's theatrical devices, psychological realism of Lillian Hellman, Freudian ideas of Sidney Howard, Susan Glaspell's early examples of feminist drama, African American drama of Willis Richardson and social consciousness of Maxwell Anderson enhanced the American drama. Some economic reasons such as increase in the production costs, rise in the numbers of profit-base theatres, decrease power of purchasing together with the influence of European dramatists enforced American dramatist to put forward new streams.

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<sup>18</sup> Mark W. Estrin ed., *Conversations with Eugene O'Neill*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990, p.17.

America led a decade of depression in 1930s. On the 'Black Thursday' of October 24, 1929, the dreams of millions in all walks of life were shattered. The tragedy soon reached the markets in Western Europe and spread all over the world. The stock market crash triggered the Great Depression of the 1930s. The recountal of 1930s describes the devastation of homelessness, unemployment and frustration. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself states: "...a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment."<sup>19</sup> Clearly, as the President himself declared, prevailing problems of unemployment and poverty, breakdown of families, homelessness cannot be denied since the statistics of the era reveals that by March 4, 1933, approximately 13 million American citizens were unemployed and industrial production dropped to 56 percent of its 1929 level, and most of the nation's banks were closed<sup>20</sup>. Unequal distribution of wealth and income, unequal distribution of corporate power, weak banking structure, foreign balance of payments and limited or poor state of economic intelligence were considered as the key characteristic factors that lay beneath the American economy and generated the crisis further. Socio-cultural adverse effects of the crisis were as desperate as the economic ones:

"Material well-being came to mean more than just personal satisfaction; it provided Americans with a sense of identity and social status. Thus, when the economy collapsed in 1929 and fell into severe depression by 1931, they not only suffered a diminished standard of living but also found their personal and family lives shattered. To lose one's job or to do work considered demeaning meant a loss of status, of dignity, of meaning."<sup>21</sup>

Decades immediately after the war were among the most prolific ones of modern American drama. Post-war psyche with its aftermaths as disillusionment, dissent, and alienation among the Americans had a direct impact on the stage. New theatrical forms including expressionism, surrealism and symbolism were welcomed by the dramatists for the sake of 'making it new'. Post-war circumstances were pertinently vocalized by the prominent representative of era, by the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940):

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<sup>19</sup> Richard D. Heffner, *A Documentary History of the United States*, Seventh Revised Edition, New York: Signet Classic, 2002, p.323.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Reeves, C. *The Twentieth-Century America - A Brief History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> Jack Lane and Maurice O'Sullivan eds., *A Twentieth-Century American Reader*, Volume I, Washington: U.S. Department of State, 1999, p. 285.

“Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a revery of long days and nights; destined finally to go out into that dirty gray turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.”<sup>22</sup>

As Fitzgerald observed, ‘fear of poverty and worship of success’ dominated the minds of American citizens, so did the themes of drama. Particularly, what Fitzgerald stressed out can be deduced as the illustration of the definition of modernism outlined by J.A Cuddon in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1999) “...modernism reveals a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position and function in the universe”<sup>23</sup>. Specifically, O'Neill revealed the ‘man's position’ as “that self-defeating self-obsession which is the discount we moderns have to pay for the loan of life.”<sup>24</sup> Grim atmosphere of depression decades in material and spiritual world somehow laid in the representative works. Economic crash of Great Depression in 1930s in one hand closed several theatres permanently, on the other hand gave birth to new themes of economic sufferings, leftist political ideologies, disillusionment and anger. Dramatic conflicts emerged out of that controversies of America found their in places in Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934) and *The Little Foxes* (1939) and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938). Plays interpreting the world from the working class' point of view, namely ‘agitprop’ drama, which deals with the drama for the sake of political propaganda, found its natural dynamics in the economically collapsed setting of 1930s. The most famous of that ‘proletarian dramatists’ was Clifford Odets, writer of *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) that calls for ‘Strike’ at the end of the play. Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (1935) deals with the very problems of immigrants. Another socially conscious dramatist Robert Emmet Sherwood reflected collective fears haunting American mind especially with his anti-war plays.

As it was before, the foreign policy of the U.S. towards conflicts in Europe is defined as ‘independent internationalism’ and policy of ‘isolationism’ which was

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<sup>22</sup> F. Scott, Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960, p.211.

<sup>23</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London: Penguin Books, 1999, p.515-516.

<sup>24</sup> Oscar Cargill ed., *O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism*, New York: New York University Press, 1961, p. 108.

strengthened with neutrality acts, too. These policies had prevented the involvement of any foreign war until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. However, after Second World War, a situation similar to that of after World War I emerged in terms of economic growth and establishment of America's role as a global power. Its power was solidified in universal terms and domestic economic capacity was flowered:

“The United States underwent profound changes during the course of the war. The American people united behind the war effort, collecting scrap iron, rubber, and old newspapers and planting “victory gardens”. But more than national unity and enthusiasm were required to win the war. Essential to victory was the successful mobilization of all sectors of the economy – industry, finance, agriculture, and labor. America's big businesses got even bigger, as did its central government, labor unions, and farms.”<sup>25</sup>

Following World War II, America, with a dramatic shift from her ‘isolationism’ policy, participated in United Nations which gave her the authorization of being the major actor in the global affairs. As President Harry S. Truman declared in his address to opening session of United Nations Conference in 1945, “...we must build a new world, a far better world -one in which the eternal dignity of man is respected”<sup>26</sup>. The President was sure that they “will find our (their) way to a secure peace, for the ultimate benefit of all humanity”<sup>27</sup>. Ironically enough, Truman presidency not only failed to realize its holy mission to implement ultimate benefit to humanity but also created new crisis. The Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Second Red Scare and McCarthyism were some of the important conflicts seen in the Cold War era immediately after the war. Moreover, the most ardent anti-Communist warrior Senator Joseph R. McCarthy waged a cold war at home as well. McCarthy reflected “...in many ways represented the worst domestic excesses of the Cold War.”<sup>28</sup> Communists or their sympathizers were subjected to these ‘domestic excesses’; many people lost their job or imprisoned

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Beth Norton and David M. Katzman eds., *A People and A Nation, A History of the United States*, Fourth Edition, U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994, 818.

<sup>26</sup> Robert A. Divine, *Second Change: the Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II*, New York: Atheneum, 1967, p.287.

<sup>27</sup> “*Harry S. Truman's Address to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco*”, April 25, 1945, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12391>>.

<sup>28</sup> George Clack ed., *Outline of U.S History*, Bureau of International Information Programs, Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2005.

without concrete evidences. On the other hand, this era also witnessed a significant increase in income and affluence. Therefore, this wave of prosperity directly affected the progress of middle class as well as the workers '. Changes in social life such as education or housing were thought to be the aspects of the burgeoning middle class. Characteristically, economic welfare of 1950s transformed the socio -cultural codes of the society as well. These economic shifts brought a bout their own results such as the development of American middle-class in economic and cultural terms. As stated before, The Second World War had a profound impact on the socio -economical, cultural and political existence of America. Many workers adopted what is called white-collar jobs such as managers, teachers, salespersons, and officers. During the Second World War, the only available labor force was women. The women were encouraged with the patriotism of 'making history working for victory'. Defense p lants, building tanks, planes and ships and making munitions and several other tasks were previously considered as men's occupations however, the women of the war were working vigorously in these jobs for the sake of their country. Moreover, technological innovations such as computers, calculators, transistors, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and microwaves helped the rise of living standards and growth of the economy. The most effective technological advancement of the era was the generalization of television which is developed in 1930s and became widespread in the 1950s. The commercials on TV also worked for the good of the economy and strongly influenced its target group in terms of consumerism; people went out and bought the advertised items. The rhythm of the social life was gradually molded according to this new scheme. However, the portrait of contemporary America was not absolutely admired by all citizens. In one hand, America was running quickly to 'being dream land', on the other hand there were some who are 'down and out' or 'tired' of their country. After a long period of depression and wars, an atmosphere of "meaninglessness" began to dominate the intellectual side of the society. Bloody faces of the wars distracted the belief in idealism and c reated a sense of loss of time and space and it further lead to the emergence of 'lost generation'.

American stage in 1940s and 1950s that is considered to be ‘...both a bridge from past and a beacon to future’<sup>29</sup> experienced the greatest achievements of American drama history with; Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *Crucible* (1953), Eugene O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh* (1946) and *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1956); *Zoo Story* (1959) of Edward Albee; *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1950) and *Picnic* (1953) of William Inge; Hellman’s *Another Part of the Forest* (1946); Maxwell Anderson’s *Anne of Thousand Days* (1948); Clifford Odet’s *The Country Girl* (1950); Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). In the post-war era, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and William Inge were the prominent playwrights. Tennessee Williams won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Critics’ Circle Award with his play *The Glass Menagerie*. In 1947, Miller’s *All My Sons* brought him the prize of the Drama Critics Award. Despite the dramatists’ tendency towards new forms in terms of experimentation, decades soon after the Second World War are thought to be the zenith of American realism. Yet, it is important to note that realism of the era is not of course sole appliance of mirroring the real world. As Philip C. Kolin states “...the strides made by the post -World War theatre, particularly in stretching the boundaries of realism to accommodate the dramatists’ increased desire to probe beneath the surface into their characters’ inner selves, are still influencing our theatre today.”<sup>30</sup> Kolin’s signifies that the post-war realism which was thought to reach its peak was dramatically various and he counts Arthur Miller’s ‘psychological realism’ and Tennessee William’s ‘poetic realism’ among those various innovations (11). Since 1940s and 50s were the all encompassing years for the drama, it concurrently welcomed both the ‘boulevard theatre’ of farce and domestic comedy in Broadway fitting the taste of middle class; Arthur Miller’s psychological realism of social drama and Tennessee William’s drama of poetic realism. Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* (1953) had great emphasis on social and political issues of the era. Their great theatrical achievements were also echoed through 50s and 60s. Arthur Miller’s ‘social drama’ attacked the deceptive running of capitalist economy and society trapped by that ruthless capitalist economy, fraudulent ‘American dream’, communist hunts of

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<sup>29</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds, *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa :The University of Alabama Press , 1996 p.11

McCarthy, in a broader sense individuals' relation to individuals, society, state and the universe. Owing to the kaleidoscopic treatments of subject matters, unorthodox choice of dramatic modes, styles and methods were employed in the different plays of the same era, or even within the same play. It is hard to make sound categorizations decade by decade or play by play. Illustrations of this synchronic existence of various forms can be observed within the plays of Miller, O'Neill and Albee. Themes of the stage revolved around the burdens of the period; artificially fostered American heroism in wartime, war-industry selling guns at the hazards of Americans lives, decadence of American family system were also among the subject matters.

America was considered to be a 'great society' in 1960s. The President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared the 'great society' in his presidential campaign of 1964: "...a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their lives than the quantity of their goods."<sup>31</sup> Ironically, as a firm anticommunist and cold-warrior President Johnson asserted America as "...the place where the Peace Corps was started"<sup>32</sup> yet he would soon turned out to be one of the implementers of the longest and the most expensive war in American history, the Vietnam War. Instead of 'Peace Corps', devastating massive bombing, indiscriminate firepower, napalm and chemical herbicides started. In the course of the war, America's doctrine of bringing democracy to the whole world and the objective of establishing freedom around the world were injected into the citizens' minds. Therefore, 1960s were another turbulent era which embodied the anguish of conflict and change. At this point, it can be claimed that 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder' was not only a post-war illness which caused nightmares and extreme nervousness in Vietnam Veterans after returning home but also a metaphor of post-war situation of the country in general. As a direct consequence of the failure in Vietnam, 'neo-isolationism' emerged. Journalist Walter Lippmann declared 'neo-isolationism' as such: "Compared to people who thought they could run the universe. I am a neo-isolationist and proud of it."<sup>33</sup> Lippman, like many of his contemporaries, feels the dissent of American narcissism. Bob Dylan, who is considered as a representative voice of a generation referred to this pain and change in his well-known song: "The times they

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Augustine Lawyer and Robert Martin Schaefer, *American Political Rhetoric: A Reader*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, p.209.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.210.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p.155.



are a-changing/Come mothers and fathers throughout the land/and don't criticize what you don't understand/Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command/Your old road is rapidly aging'. Please get out of the new one if you can't lend a hand, for the times they are a-changing". More or less, pain or peculiarity of transformation shined through all the aspirations of the time. All this had relevance for the questioning America's hegemonic role as the police of the universe thus, isolation, dissent and consequently alienation of a generation. President Johnson uttered "I want to leave the footprints of America in Vietnam. We're going to turn Mekong Delta into the Tennessee Valley." <sup>34</sup> Ironically enough, post-Vietnam War period witnessed only the turning of America into 'Valley of Ashes'. Although President Nixon entitled Vietnam War as a "short-term problem", its ramifications were not as short as he anticipated. Specifically, American dream which was based on the material prosperity, lost its brightness due to the costs of the Vietnam War; generally due to the economic decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s. As a country of contradictions, America had 'other America' behind the apparent facet which was unveiled by Michael Harrington in his book entitled **Other America**. Harrington puts forward that the poor in America;

"...are the strangest poor in the history of mankind. They exist within the most powerful and rich society the world has ever known. Their misery has continued while the majority of the nation talked of itself as being "affluent" and worried about neuroses in the suburbs. In this way tens of millions of human beings became invisible. They dropped out of sight and out of mind; they were without their own political voice."<sup>35</sup>

The tragedy of the 'affluent' America was not merely about the monetary matters. Fall of the 'American Dream' was not only related to economic corruption, but also the American dream of success had other socio-cultural and political aspects. American citizens were subjected to watch the corruption of all those simultaneous aspects.

The atmosphere of anxiety and alienation in 1960s due to the ongoing conflicts of previous decades namely Second World War, McCarthyism, The Cold War, Korean War, Vietnam War, reverberated in the dramatic works of the period. Jean -Claude van

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<sup>34</sup> Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 191 9-1950*, London: The University of Carolina Press, 2000, p.187.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, New York: Touchstone Rockefeller Center 1997, p.174.

Itallie's plays *War* (1965) and *American Hurrah* (1996), Megan Terry's *Viet Rock: A Folk War Movie* (1966), written in the vein of social realism, together with the great satirist Arthur Kopit's *Indians* (1969) are considered as the "...manifestos of alienation and anxiety, testaments to the failure of the American dream"<sup>36</sup>. 1960s also witnessed the first production of a full-length play of an African-American dramatist, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. At the same time, establishment of ethnic specific theatres and theatres of color like the Negro Ensemble Company, East West Players, El Teatro Compesino, INTAR Hispanic American Arts Center and Repertorio Español gave way to the democratization of American stage. The hegemony of profit-base Broadway on American theatre in the forties and fifties vanished with the attack of Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway. In 1960s 'Off-Off Broadway' emerged as a reaction to commercialization of 'Off-Broadway' which had been founded as a reaction to commercial 'Broadway'. Aslı Tekinay evaluates the sixties as 'post Broadway' period during which hegemony of Broadway on American theatre was scattered.<sup>37</sup> That was partly due to the establishment of new non-profit theatre companies which aimed at experimenting in theatre. Innovative alternatives of Broadway embraced all new attempts of avant-garde theatre and deeply affected the very nature of American Drama. Kolin entitled the era between 1959 and 1969 as 'anxiety and alienation' and states that:

"The theatre of 1960s was aggressively experimental. For many historians it was America's most avant-garde theatre decade yet—highly revolutionary, radically absurdist, and aesthetically skeptical....the dramatists of the 1960s were open to explore new dramatic forms and techniques to publicize the faults of a self-destructive America."<sup>38</sup>

In the light of what Kolin specified about drama of 60s, it can be expressed that making generalizations or classifications about American drama at this period is extremely hard. In accordance with the progress in intellectual canon, new theories as structuralism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism together with Marxist criticism had great effects on the path of modern drama. In 60s and 70s, these theatres, as the alternatives of Broadway theatre, turned out to be great arenas of experimentators. Upheaval in

<sup>36</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p. 88.

<sup>37</sup> Aslı Tekinay, *Contemporary American Drama: 1960-2000*, İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2001, p.27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Aslı Tekinay, p. 85

American drama may be greatly attributed to such energetic, innovative and challenging transformers. Parallel to the decrease in the domination of Broadway theatre on American drama, new voices of America as Off - and Off Off-Broadway, regional theatres and New York Fringe Theatre presented a variety of dramatic modes. The establishments of Joe Cino's Caffè Cino in 1958 and the Café La Mama of Ellen Stewart in 1960 were thought to be the birthplace of Off -Off Broadway. Off-Off Broadway gave stage to the plays of Sam Shepard, Paul Foster, Jean -Claude Van Itallie and Ross Alexander. In this productive era, a powerful and influential writer, Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) was presented. Because of the unavailability of space and the occasion, one-act plays were more suitable for Off-Off Broadway theatre however, Lanford Wilson's *Balm in Gilead* (1965) was first full length play to be presented there.

American theatre of 1960s blossomed with the introduction of Sam Shepard's outstanding plays. He is thought to be the writer who "...conferred upon the American stage its post-modernity in the 1960s....interjected a youthful, exuberant, and experimental voice that extended our appreciation of a postmodern aesthetic."<sup>39</sup> Material and spiritual starvation of human beings were recursive subject matters of him. Shepard's plays reflected the dark side of the contemporary America. His view of America is summarized by Matthew Roudane as such: "...his is an America that has lost touch with its own visions, in which myths have become fantasies, family units have collapsed, language is broken, metaphors pulled apart, natural rhythms dislocated."<sup>40</sup> Shepard as the 'poet of postmodern condition' captured the images of American West; farmers, rock-stars, spacemen, cowboys, gangsters plunged into the themes of decadence of American Dream, loss of identity, quest for the roots, betrayal and disintegration of family through the rhyme of his poetical language. As a writer of over forty plays, Shepard's career goes on to determine American drama in 70s and 80s as well.

Last but not least, one of the most significant virtues of 1960s was undoubtedly Edward Albee with his new drama that aimed to put forward what lies behind the gilded face of America. A wide variety of subject matters of him such as anxiety and alienation in the very fabric of the society, individual and the family, disillusionment, burdens of

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew Roudane ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.1

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, Matthew Roudane, p.9.

modern life, American dream of success and communication were conveyed through characteristics of the absurdist theatre, realism and expressionism yet he is considered to experiment with the realist theatre. The fact that his first work *Zoo Story*, performed in Off-Broadway in 1959, was a perennial merit for the theatre with its subject matter of criticism of American way of life. *The American Dream*, first performed a year later, also bears similar intellectual anxieties. In the same way, another early play of Albee, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, written in 1959 is an attack on racial discrimination and contribution to the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), *Tiny Alice* (1964) and *A Delicate Balance* (1964) were also the plays which dominated American stage in sixties. It is dangerous to label Albee as a pure absurdist playwright although his earlier plays bear resemblances with that of Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. Discussions on the genre or style of Albee has still remained in scholarly terms. No matter identified as absurdist or realist, as stated in the biography written by Kennedy Center, Edward Albee was a writer who changed 'the landscape of American Drama':

"Edward Albee burst onto the American theatrical scene in the late 1950s with a variety of plays that detailed the agonies and disillusionment of that decade and the transition from the placid Eisenhower years to the turbulent 1960s. Albee's plays, with their intensity, their grappling with modern themes, and their experiments in form, startled critics and audiences alike while changing the landscape of American drama. He was unanimously hailed as the successor to Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill."<sup>41</sup>

As it is afore mentioned, categorization of the dramatists in these turbulent eras is highly problematic. Specifically for Albee, it is more difficult to label him as a dramatist of a certain dramatic movement since he is an experimentalist writer who never gave up trying various dramatic forms.

1970s started as the continuance of the previous decade of disillusionment. It was marked not only by the loss of faith in government but also by the economic decline. Individuals who were devoid of ideals and values in the vacuum atmosphere suffered from the ongoing perception of futility. Ties between men and men, men and the family, men and the society, men and the government, ties between men and the

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<sup>41</sup> Archana Srinivasan, *Biographies of 20th Century Writers*, Chennai: Sura Books Ltd., 2007, p.83.

universe were unbound. Together with America, the citizens also lost their direction in this course of the detachment from their spiritual roots. Higher divorce rates, increased pre-marital sex, fewer ratio of having children, increase in couples living together, rise in female-headed households, rise in drug use, rising crime rates, 10 to 15 percent annual inflation rate, increasing costs of energy, growing concern about an environmental crisis, declining standard of living, increasing use of sex to sell products, decline in church attendance among WASP, American middle-class, growth of fundamentalist, evangelical churches and television ministries among Southern whites and American working-class were the characteristic trends of America in the traumatic 70s.

‘Me generation’ of 70s that stands for the people who left behind the social activism of the 1960s and focused on their individual well-being and preoccupied with individual self-absorption remained impressive in the next decade as well. Perceived sense of futility, loss of faith in solidarity, indifference towards public issues, moral decay, vacuum atmosphere devoid of ideals and values were characterized Americans’ ‘narcissistic’ era. Adrienne Rich’s poem **In Those Years** highlights the very essence of the ‘me’ decades:

“In those years, people will say, we lost track  
of the meaning of we, of you  
we found ourselves  
reduced to I  
and the whole thing became  
silly, ironic, terrible:  
we were trying to live a personal life  
and yes, that was the only life  
we could bear witness to  
But the great dark birds of history screamed and plunged  
into our personal weather  
They were headed somewhere else but their beaks  
and pinions drove  
along the shore, through the rags of fog  
where we stood, saying I.”

Speaker in the poem laments the loss of the meaning of ‘we’. ‘We’ that stands for the idea of collectivity and communality, however, in the course of time it lost its essence and reduced into ‘I’.

In the 70s, American theatre boomed with the emergence of the novelties. Robert Wilson’s, Richard Forman’s and Lee Breuer’s plays are regarded as the samples

of these avant-garde tendencies. Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus* which involves music, dance and rituals, blends avant-garde with Greek tragedy and highlights the notion of 'catharsis'. One of the revolutionary playwrights of the era was David Rabe, a social dramatist who focused on the anti-war themes. *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* (1971), *Sticks and Bone* (1971) and *Steamers* (1976) refer to the Vietnam War with a 'new realist' approach. It would be unfair to summarize Rabe as a war playwright; his subject matters encompass wide variety of themes such as racism, death, communication, American way of life and social hypocrisy.

Generative aspect of 1970s was heralded with the appearance of David Mamet whose contributions to American drama is thought to be akin to that of Edward Albee. Mamet similar to his predecessors as Williams, O'Neill and Albee explored the failure of American dream, decline of American values and idealism in the face of capitalism, alienation, breakdown of the interactions between people and the words together with the very psychological depths of human beings. He welcomes realist, minimalist, absurdist and even post modernist tendencies to create his original literary canon. Mamet himself declares "...I'd like to write a really good play sometime. Like O'Neill, Odets, Chekhov, something the way it really is, capture the action of the way things really go on."<sup>42</sup> C. W. E Bigsby describes Mamet's realism as 'renovated realism' and states: "There is, indeed, a distinctive rhythm of his work but he is interested neither simply in documenting contemporary speech patterns nor in anything as self-conscious as poetic drama."<sup>43</sup> As a writer of various dramatic modes, Mamet not only inherits traditional realism of American drama but he is also heavily influenced by European Absurdist. The writer himself announces this influence as such "...Beckett and Pinter – of course I'm influenced by them. If you're in modern dance how could you not be influenced by Martha Graham?"<sup>44</sup> Tony Stafford also signifies the diversity of Mamet's realism: "Mamet is not just another angry, conscience-stricken social protester, but an artist who draws upon the historical patterns and connections within the Judeo-Christian tradition in such a way as to raise common ideas above the level of propaganda to a

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<sup>42</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*, Volume III, Beyond Broadway, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.266

<sup>43</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Mel Gussow, *The Daring Visions of Four New, Young Playwrights*, *The New York Times*, 30 November, 1977: 12.

plane of a more abstract, philosophical treatment of the subject.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, Mamet has given a novel touch to American drama with his extremely distinguished approaches even at the very outset of his career with such plays: *The Duck Variation* (1972), *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (1974), *A Life in a Theatre* (1976), *The Woods* (1977), *American Buffalo* (1977) and *Water Engine* (1978). The given American panorama in his plays is totally different from what is written in history. So-called recoveries in economy, socio-cultural upheavals, high living standards of American citizens, briefly progress of capitalism in America not only created that blessed powerful wealthy America but also created a merciless competitive atmosphere which is occupied with the alienated, psychologically collapsed profit-driven citizens, who waste their life for the sake of that progress. David Mamet’s plays touch the very untold grim aspects of American psyche as David Krasner notes:

“David Mamet is perhaps the most quintessentially American of contemporary playwrights. Not only has he taken as his explicit subject America and its mythic Dream, but also taken as his form the multiple media of American culture to explore the potency of America’s national and international myth....Mamet examines the potentially destructive, if not violent, effect of American Dream.”<sup>46</sup>

As Krasner explicitly summarizes, David Mamet’s plays are the explorations of the demerits of American Dream. They serve for the aim of ‘demystification of American dream’. Mamet as a keen observer of American society refers to America as a spiritual and material ‘wasteland’ where all the characters are in a futile quest for accessing the dream which turns out to be a nightmare at the end. Macro cosmic setting of Mamet’s business plays is the brutal system of economy. No matter setting is a house, a sales agent or a junkshop, the main background setting is America, others are only metaphors of that America. The settings on which the plays take place are only symbolic reflections of a wider and deep macrocosmic world. David Mamet is an American writer “whose work has addressed not only the ‘actual life’ of Americans but also the fantasies with which they choose to cloak that life and language with which they express what he sees as its growing anxiety and depression....his plays stand as a

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<sup>45</sup> Tony J. Stafford, “Visions of Promised Land David Mamet’s *Glengarry Glen Ross*” in *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.186.

<sup>46</sup> David Krasner ed., *A Companion to Twentieth Century American Drama*, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 406.

consistent critique of a country whose public myths he regards as destructive, and whose deep lack of communality he finds disturbing.”<sup>47</sup> Mamet’s plays give us a vivid picture of individuals who are trapped between dream and the reality. Characters ultimately lose their identity in the labyrinth of American way of existence. As Bigsby states “like Albee, Mamet is a poet of loss.”<sup>48</sup> It is highly paradoxical in Mamet’s plays thus, the more you tried to gain, the more you lose. It is again paradoxical because lives of the characters who are fooled by the glimmer of American dream are blindly sacrificed for the sake of American capitalism. Any relation in society even within one’s own family or colleagues is goal oriented relation that is predetermined by the dynamics of it. This macrocosmic collapse in the socio-economic situation shows itself in the psychological states of the individuals, in their relations with themselves and in their relations with external world in microcosmic level. A virulent disease which leads to ‘wasteland’ spreads from the minds to outer world and in turn spread, from outer world to inner. “Terrorism” as a constantly uttered word in America comes on stage as ‘emotional terrorism’ and “economic terrorism” in the plays of Mamet which is caused by the corrupted American business ethic.

American drama of 1980s American drama was dominated by the outstanding works of Mamet, Shepard, Lanford Wilson, Marsha Norman, August Wilson. Mamet’s *Edmond* (1982), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), *The Shawl* (1985) and *Speed-the-Plow* (1987); Shepard’s *Fool for Love* (1983), *A Lie of Mind* (1987), *True West* (1980); August Wilson’s *Fences* (1983); Lanford Wilson’s *Into the Woods* (1987), *Angels Fall* (1982), *Burn This* (1987) were penned in eighties. Gerald M. Berkowitz comments on the panorama of the American theatre between 1975 and 1990 as such:

“Plays by women; plays by black, Hispanic and Asian dramatists; plays by and about the concerns of feminists, homosexuals and Vietnam veterans; plays reflecting regional subjects and cultures; plays in styles ranging from the mime/dance/ritual of performance artists to the most conventional domestic realism – for the first time in the twentieth century American theatre had the capacity to stage such a broad representation of the American experience.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, **David Mamet**, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p 12.

<sup>48</sup> C.W.E Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*, Volume III, Beyond Broadway, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.252.

<sup>49</sup> Gerald M. Berkowitz, *American Drama of the Twentieth Century*, New York: Longman Publishing. 1992, p. 167.



As a matter of fact Berkowitz's holistic observation celebrates the differences and varieties of modern American drama towards the end of the twentieth century. A highly multicultural America reflects its various tastes for art on stage. Mamet's career also flourished throughout the 1990s with his distinguished plays as *The Cryptogram* (1995) and *Oleanna* (1992). As a prolific writer, he also writes scripts for *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981), *The Verdict* (1982) –won an Academy Award nomination-, *The Untouchables* (1987) and *Hoffa* (1992). Moreover he is also director of his own scripts of *House of Games* (1988), *Homicide* (1991) and *Oleanna* (1995).

By the first half of 1980s, the economy entered a sustainable growth period. This progress vocalized by Ronald Reagan with the slogan of "It's morning again in America." 'Boom-time' and 'boom-time values' are put forward by Gil Troy in his book entitled **Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s** ;

“Reagan's vision represented his keystone contribution to the 1980s, a decade of boom times and boom-time values. Perhaps the biggest consumer revolt of the period came in 1985, when Coca-Cola company unveiled “New Coke,” a sweeter, tangier, more Pepsilike version of America's national beverage. Reporters played the grassroots backlash as a modern American Revolution, defending “baseball, hamburgers, Coke,” although some critics simply grumbled that New Coke did not mix well with their rum”<sup>50</sup>

Troy goes on his commentary on the re-emergence of Coke with Senator David Pryor's celebration of this rebellion as a “meaningful moment in the history of America”. Troy's further comments are as follows:

“The centrality of a soft drink to the identity of both New Coke and Classic Coke advocates reflected America's epidemic consumerism. New technologies, ideologies, and bureaucracies, along with revolutions in economics, marketing, advertising, and conceptions of leisure, had transformed the cautious American consumer, once wary of chain stores, into the 1980s' sale-searching, trend-spotting, franchise-hopping shopper. Spurred by Reagan's gospel of progress and prosperity, Americans happily indulged themselves.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gil Troy, **Morning In America : How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s** , United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2005, p 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Gil Troy, p. 3 .

Due to the fact that eighties were considered as the decade of a new upheaval in terms of economy under Reagan administration, redistribution of wealth was one-sided. Maldistribution of income and wealth deepened dramatically due to the Reagan's policy of decreasing tax rates and regulatory provisions. As a result of that virulent antigovernmentism and 'unregulated capitalism' there emerged inequality reign of economy-policy makers in which the richer got richer and poorer got poorer. Elizabeth Drew attracts attention towards reign of 'culture of money' prevalent in Americans' minds: "...Indisputably, the greatest change in Washington over the past twenty-five years...has been the preoccupation with money....The culture of money dominates Washington as never before."<sup>52</sup> Preoccupation with money as a result of the established economic and political status quo of the time entailed rampant individualism that runs the minds of Americans.

The 1990s were marked by rapid progression of globalization following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. America in 90s taught to be under 'moral self-repair'. Moreover by the mid-1990s she was also under economical self-repair. Rise of the Internet, blossoming of personal computers, mobile phones gave way to the new industries and professions. George Herbert Walker Bush who was considered as Reagan's heir was elected as the 41st president of the United States. Although Bush had promised "no new taxes" in his 1988 campaign, he was forced to raise tax revenues and impose new taxes due to the national debts. In 1992, America witnessed Bill Clinton replaced George Bush and the control of Senate and House shifted to Republicans in 1994. Although the administrations are changing in the course of the American history, anger, distrust and bitterness that is inherited from earlier decades goes on to haunt the landscape of America.

Decades of American history with all its evolutions, revolutions, progresses, declines and crashes allied to constitute Americans' collective consciousness and further collective literal appreciation. Specific works of the given decade reflect hopes, anguish, expectations, hardships, styles of its era; or reacted against them. Types of the 'characters' may change from being 'stereo' to being 'round' in the course of the art history, yet their interminable quest –no matter melodramatic, realist or a post-modern– for filling the deficiencies in their life remains unchanged to great extent. It can be said

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<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *The Corruption of American Politics*, New Jersey: Birch Lane Press, 1999, p. 61.

that although some literary works of art hopefully present mans' quest in microcosmic level; in the face of the macrocosm, mans' quest is never ended; all the characters will die while waiting for 'Godot'. In 1888 Friedrich Nietzsche foreshadowed the destiny of man in terms of nihilism as follows;

“What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs. . . . For some time now our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.”<sup>53</sup>

When we remind the popular comment that considers modern world as 'global village', then Nietzsche's prophecy about Europe can be appropriately adapted to America. As a final thought, above given brief history of America, with all its abstinences, can be taken as the 'signs' of 'tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade'. In order to rationalize the aforementioned historical background, it would be convenient to refer David Krasner:

The history of a national literature inescapably concerns itself with the questions of national identity. Literary history is neither social nor political history, but an historical understanding of dramatic literature cannot be separated from cultural influences, political movements, and social change. Directly or indirectly, American drama reflects the American social milieu”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Walter Kaufmann and R.J Hollingdale eds, New York: Random House, 1967, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> Krasner, David, *A Companion to the Twentieth-Century American Drama*, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 2.

## 2.0 AMERICAN BUSINESS ETHIC IN DAVID MAMET'S *GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS* AND *AMERICAN BUFFALO*

*"The business of America is business....We're a nation of entrepreneurs"*<sup>55</sup>

In 1925, President Calvin Coolidge declared that "the chief business of the American people is business." As a keen practitioner of the laissez faire policies, he believed that 'small government was always the best government'. The policies of lowering the taxes and lessening the regulation on economic facilities caused emergence of a gap between domains of government and economy and created the need for systematization. David Mamet's ironic reference to Coolidge seems more meaningful when his economic policies -adopted in order to abolish corporations' limitations and difficulties for the sake of freedom of business - and unforeseen Crash that came four year later, are taken into account. Statement that '...we're a nation of entrepreneurs' is equally more meaningful since the United States of America was founded by the early 'entrepreneurs'.

Building on the need for the common norms of each kind of individual, economic or social practices, ethical disputes take place in order to provide systematization and reconciliation. Although the etymological root of 'Ethics' has some ambiguities, it is important to mention that the word 'ethics' emanates from *Eqos* (ethos), concept which means 'habit' or 'custom'. Ethics has a long history from ancient Greeks to the present. For the time being, ethics is mainly attributed to the study of values and customs of a person or group. The criteria of being ethic are then evaluated in the context of the values of the group to which individuals belong. Business ethics is application of these societal values to the decision-making process and the given responses to moral or ethical problems that arise in the business operation. Ethics arises out of the question of what one/group should do in certain circumstances. Under the vast umbrella of ethics; there are personal, professional/business, socio-political, research, environmental ethics and others, dealing with the correct practices in the given fields.

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<sup>55</sup> Qtd. in Jennifer Allen, "**David Mamet's Hard Sell**," *New York Magazine*, 9 April 1984, p.40

Contemporary American business ethic, which takes its roots from Puritan ethic, can only be understood in an historical context. From the first entrepreneurs as Puritans, who blessed economic individualism by claiming that engaging in profitable activities means serving God's will, to the entrepreneurs of industrialization, 'Robber Barons', whose economic outlook was based on the concept of 'survival of the fittest', and to contemporary business activities ethics emerged as an ambiguous phenomena. Indulgence into the economic facilities in America at first started with the aim of working for the 'common good', yet was reduced into working for private interests. With the expansion of private ownership over production means, dilemmas of capitalism created restlessness. To cope with the malpractice of private ownership and the problem of conflict of interests gave rise to ethical theories of business. Andrew Crane by revealing that ethics and morality is generally used interchangeably makes clear distinctions between them. According to Crane, definitions of morality and ethics are as such:

**Morality** is concerned with the norms, values, and beliefs embedded in social processes which define right and wrong for an individual or a community. **Ethics** is concerned with the study of morality and the application of reason to elucidate specific rules and principles that determine right and wrong for a given situation. These rules and principles are called ethical theories.<sup>56</sup>

In Crane's approach towards ethics and morality, the former precedes the latter by organizing and rationalizing. In this sense, depiction of ethic may be considered as similar to Howard Bowen's, who is considered to be the 'Father of Corporate Social Responsibility', description of social responsibility as a concept referring to "...the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society."<sup>57</sup> It is mentioned that policies have to be in accordance with the common values of the society. However, for America the problematic point is with the established common values which are reduced into pursuing self-gain in terms of American dream. The famous economist Milton Friedman's rejects such a kind of social

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew Crane and Dirk Matten, *Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.8.

<sup>57</sup> Howard Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, New York: Harper & Row, 1953, p.6.

responsibility by claiming that ‘The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits’, is worth to be mentioned:

“...Businessmen believe that they are defending free enterprise when they declaim that business is not concerned ‘merely’ with profit but also with promoting desirable ‘social’ ends; that business has a ‘social conscience’ and takes seriously its responsibilities for providing employment, eliminating discrimination, avoiding pollution and whatever else may be the catchwords of the contemporary crop of reformers... Businessmen who talk this way are unwitting puppets of the intellectual forces that have been undermining the basis of a free society these past decades... there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud”<sup>58</sup>

Friedman puts forward that a businessman who considers ethical overtones of his business is an ‘unwitting puppet of the intellectual forces’. According to him, the foremost responsibility of a business is to increase profits. He also warns the businessmen not to break ‘the rules of the game’ yet in American business system, rules are not concrete. He argues that ethical concerns must be put aside and any moral constraint must be ignored in accordance with the free market mentality. In the competitive enterprise, there is a hierarchical exploitation among managers, workers and consumers. Recent ethical disputes aim to declare reconciliation among these agents. On the contrary, Mamet’s both plays show us that “once you take a step back from the moral responsibility you’ve undertaken, you’re lost”<sup>59</sup>. American business has to have ethical responsibilities towards his employees and customers at the same time. In the same way, In David Mamet’s *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* erosion in this ethical perspective is clearly presented. Theoretically, employees have to develop their own moral responses to the conflicts. Nevertheless, established objective of increasing self-profit at any cost diverts and determines the direction of ethical decision. Businessmen solve their ethical conflicts with pragmatist and individualist concerns since the very socio-cultural structure places great emphasis on “the ends justify the means” method. Sometimes, as in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, employees are forced to

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<sup>58</sup> Milton Friedman, ‘*The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits*’, *New York Times Magazine*, 13 September 1970, 33:122-26.

<sup>59</sup> Leslie Kane ed., *David Mamet in Conversation*, United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, p.12.

indulge in unethical conducts due to the very nature of their employment. Selling worthless land as a profitable investment is not ethical in universal sense. Kimball King puts forward that Mamet makes the audiences uncomfortable by unveiling our ‘civilized masks’. He goes on that “the line is crossed between ethically repugnant but legal actions and overly antisocial, prosecutable acts.”<sup>60</sup> The main implementation context of ethical decision is when the interests of a customer/society and business intersect yet the collapse of ethics is seen in the course of this intersection. The lack of ethicality in business breeds the unethical conducts of its employees. Mamet himself puts forward that criminality comes inherently from business activities. As a writer who has experience about “selling” informs us in the preface of the play that potential customer is “...called a *lead* – in the same way that a clue in a criminal case is called a *lead* – i.e. it may lead to the suspect, the suspect in this case being a *prospect*.”<sup>61</sup> A desperate salesman in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Shelley Levene does not manage to reach his dream of success through normative methods and this failure finally leads him to burglarize the office he works in. An employee, who feels that he is being exploited, easily rationalizes the act of exploitation of others including customers and colleagues. In both plays, loss of ethical conduct among businessmen brings about loss of comradeship, mutual dependence and trust. Since the resale shop of Don and real estate office of Mitch and Murray are devoid of ethical norms, ethical problems are solved by jungle rules. Ethical duty of respecting the expectations of employees and consumers are disregarded. In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, priorities of the organization strongly clashes with the values of the employees and customers. Consequently, as a natural necessity of survival, employees adapt themselves to the sanctions of the business, no matter they find sanctions unethical. Specifically they are compelled to tell lies, cheat, manipulate and even steal. In the American business system, one who is able to adapt himself to these necessities is considered as the ‘top man’, the process and methods that carry him to the ‘top-manship’ is ignored. It is probable that at the end of the competition in the real estate office, Roma would win Cadillac for his great contributions to the business of selling undesirable real estates as profitable investment. At this point, it can be claimed that his organization compels him to act unethically. The competition itself reveals the

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<sup>60</sup> Kimball King, “**Gradations of Criminality in the Plays of David Mamet**” in *The Art of Crime*, Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004, p.137.

<sup>61</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.i.

logic of American business system, top man will be rewarded due to his ability to deceive customers. The employee who makes the least number of deals will be fired for his inability to manipulate his customers.

The very mechanistic expectations seeded at the foundation of the country retarded the establishment of all-encompassing ethical norms and in the course of the history showed itself in the case of scandals of Shell, McDonalds, Union Carbide, Enron, Arthur Andersen, WorldCom and so on. As it is well-known, economic dynamics in a society cannot be abstracted from the other realms of the society and in turn, the progress or the collapse in economy will directly influence the balance of it. Economic scheme in a society will, then be the mode of all interactions. David Mamet, as a writer who considers economic life in America as a 'lottery' states that

“Instead of rising with the masses, one should rise from the masses. Your extremity is my opportunity. That’s what forms the basis of our economic life, and this is what forms the rest of our lives. That American myth: the idea of something out of nothing....one feels one can only succeed at the cost of someone else. Economic life in America is a lottery.... “The more I have, the less you have”. So one can only succeed at the cost of the failure of another, which is what a lot of my plays – *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*- are about.”<sup>62</sup>

David Mamet clearly states that what forms the basis of our economic life also forms the rest of our lives. Individuals who wage a Darwinian war against each other in order to be the winner in that 'lottery' at last find themselves depleted and exhausted; possessing nothing but disillusionment at the end, ironically enough. Mamet replies Matthew Roudane's question of "What are your thematic concerns in *Glengarry Glen Ross*?" as such: "...the play concerns how business corrupts, how the hierarchical business system tends to corrupt. It becomes legitimate for those in power in the business world to act unethically. The effect on little guy is that he turns to crime. And petty crime goes punished; major crimes go unpunished."<sup>63</sup> As the writer himself states, his play *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* touch that very core of the American capitalistic system. The only commonality between *Glengarry Glen Ross* and

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<sup>62</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p.178.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew C. Roudane, "**Something Out of Nothing**", in *David Mamet in Conversation* Leslie Kane ed., United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, p.47.



*American Buffalo* is not American business system; Dennis Carroll determines other similarities as such:

They have all-male casts and deal with particularly male pressures and social dynamics; they are set in Chicago and are suffused with the street idiom and driving energy of that city; the dialogue is more prominent than usual; the scenic metaphor of 'trashed' workplace forms a significant comment on the action; the main characters trap themselves as they become impaled on one precipitate, ill-considered action; a potential friendship between 'partners' is subverted by competitive one-upmanship and the forces it unleashes.<sup>64</sup>

Similarities that Carroll refers can be congregated to form a wider picture of America and Americans in the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Main connection between these two plays is that both of them manifest the very unseen realities of American society through 'fringe characters' and fringe settings. His characters and setting in other plays are also from all walks of life; *Glengarry Glen Ross* – a real estate, *American Buffalo* – a resale shop, *Cryptogram* – a living room, *Edmond* – common places of New York as house, pub, street...and so on., *Mr. Happiness* – a radio station and *Lakeboat* – a lake boat. Mamet brilliantly employs common settings and fringe characters as denunciators of corruption in American business system. Carroll observes that incentive and contexts that drive both the salesmen of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and petty crooks of *American Buffalo* is the same, it is American capitalism.<sup>65</sup> Since they are the creations of the same system commonality between them is unavoidable.

*Glengarry Glen Ross* is a microcosm in which Mamet's commentary '...one can only succeed at the cost of the failure of another' can be totally realized. *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a real estate office where a contest among four salesmen is established and according to the rules of the contest, top man wins Cadillac, the second man wins a set of steak knives and the bottom two men get fired. Murray and Mitch are the company directors and they "...remain safely offstage yet are frighteningly omnipresent, have introduced a system which means that those salesmen are not merely in competition but effectively at war with each other."<sup>66</sup> The unseen company owners, Murray and Mitch start a jungle war among salesmen by means of sales competition. As Benedict

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<sup>64</sup> Dennis Carroll, *David Mamet*, London: MacMillan, 1987, p.31.

<sup>65</sup> Dennis Carroll, *David Mamet*, London: MacMillan, 1987, p.32.

<sup>66</sup> Benedict Nightingale, "*Glengarry Glen Ross*" in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet* Christopher Bigsby ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.91.

Nightingale highlights, in real estate, 'war' is inevitable since Darwinian laws dominate the office with the rules of laissez-faire capitalism. The man who sells the most will be selected at the end of that 'natural selection'. Glengarry Glen Ross turns out to be a prototype of American business which is ruled by the Darwinian law of 'the survival of the fittest'. The writer himself has noted about his Pulitzer -Prize winning *Glengarry Glen Ross* that "...To me the play is about a society with only one bottom line: How much money you make."<sup>67</sup> Competitive individualism and ruthless laws of the 'jungle' lead to a savage hysteria among these salesmen. Top man and the second man 'succeed at the cost of the failure of' third and the fourth. Relation among these four men is of course shaped according to these rules.

Similar to *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *American Buffalo* is a play which presents the ruthless jungle laws of American business system through the microcosm of a Resale shop. Matthew Roudane notes that *American Buffalo*, at first glance, may be seen as 'a simple play about simple men who cannot pull off a simple robbery' however, he goes on that 'the play's ostensible simplicity, however, expands into a parodic version of the American dream, a social drama, and a metaphysical work of surprising complexity and genuine originality.'<sup>68</sup> As Roudane indicates that *American Buffalo* has an ostensible simplicity since the whole plot revolves around a simple robbery which is ended in failure. Don Dubrow, one of the three characters in the play, is a man in his late forties and the owner of the Don's Resale Shop. He sells a buffalo -head nickel for 90 dollars to a coin collector. Don later thinks that buffalo -head nickel is much more valuable and decides to steal it back. First, he plans to implement the robbery with the help of Bob who is Don's gopher however, his friend Walter Cole, Teach persuades him that Bob is too naïve to be in that 'business'. The First Act of the play takes place in the morning; act two starts around 11.00 that night. Act I presents the discussions about the robbery yet, Act II presents collapse of that planned one. Carroll states that "...the linkage of the action to American 'business' principles is direct and organic in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. In *American Buffalo* it is more metaphorical."<sup>69</sup> Its simple plot and the aphasia of the

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<sup>67</sup> Mel Gussow, *Real Estate World a Model for Mamet*, *The New York Times*, 28 March 1984, Sec. C, p. 19.

<sup>68</sup> Matthew Roudane, "Betrayal and Friendship: David Mamet's *American Buffalo*" in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet* Christopher Bigsby ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.57

<sup>69</sup> Dennis Carroll, *David Mamet*, London: MacMillan, 1987, p.33.

characters who are unable to establish any concrete action or relation, make the business linkage metaphorical. Moreover, in the light of Carroll's analysis, it can be argued that 'delinquents' in *American Buffalo* are metaphors of 'businessmen'; on the other hand 'businessmen' in *Glengarry Glen Ross* are metaphors of 'delinquents'.

*Glengarry Glen Ross* starts towards the end of the competition when the manager of the real estate, John Williamson, and the salesman Shelly Levene sit at a Chinese restaurant. Levene was once a successful salesman but now he is on the verge of failure. The beginning words of the play reveal Levene's failure in expressing himself in the face of business: "John... John...John. Okay. John. John. Look :(Pause.)"<sup>70</sup> Pathetic speech of Levene is to convince the boss, John Williamson, to give him desirable 'leads' (the names and address of the most valuable 'prospects'). However hired as a guardian of the business system established by the Mitch and Murray, Williamson refuses to give him the hot leads due to his weak performance. There emerged a paradoxical situation and 'paradigm of competitive capitalist society'<sup>71</sup>; accessing the addresses of possible buyers is only way of making good deals and selling the lands, on the contrary, hot deals are only given to the best salesman as Bigsby points out "...this is a world in which success breeds success"<sup>72</sup>. However, the word 'success' bears different connotations in the business world. Ironically enough, at the very beginning of the *American Buffalo*, by the time Don and Bob discuss their robbery, they mention it as 'business'. Don wants Bob to remember their 'business deal' which stands for their robbery plan. Don plans to steal the buffalo -head nickel and wants Bob to watch that guy. The word 'business' turns out to be the connotation of crime at this scene. As it is mentioned above, crime itself is metaphor of 'business'.

Entirely, Act One, Scene One of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Levene hopelessly and pathetically begs Williamson. We have learnt that Ricky Roma and Dave Moss are the top salesmen and Richard Aaronow and Shelly Levene are likely to be fired for the time being. Desperate salesmen's desperate struggle in the restricted cage of American capitalism makes all his attempts tragic. All attempts are resulted as benefits of the business but not the benefits of the individuals. Levene's grievous plea to Williamson

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<sup>70</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.1

<sup>71</sup> C.W.E Bigsby, "David Mamet: All True Stories" in *David Mamet* Harold Bloom ed., Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, p.182.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.182

bears important aspects about the ‘war’ of being the top man. This is not a fair play since Levene offers a certain percent from his commission if he gives good deals. In the course of the speech, this is the first time Williamson is interested in Levene and he wants fifty dollars cash per lead. As Tony J. Stafford points out that for Mamet ‘ancient spiritual values and beliefs are susceptible of being destroyed and replaced by the new religion of money and commercialism’.<sup>73</sup> Mamet’s characters blindly worship the religion of money. In the money-driven psyche of characters money has the utmost value. Williamson is supposed to give the best deals to the salesman who makes the best deal. However at this point, though he is the director of the real estate, he would sell two addresses to Levene for twenty percent of commission and a hundred bucks. Agreement is failed just because Levene has not got any cash on him except the money for paying ‘gas’:

**Williamson:** A hundred bucks.

*Pause*

**Levene:** Now? *(Pause.)* Now?

**Williamson:** Now. *(Pause.)* Yes...*When?*

**Levene:** Ah, *shit*, John...

*Pause*

**Williamson:** I wish I could.

**Levene:** You fucking asshole... *(Pause.)* I haven’t got it. *(Pause.)* I haven’t got it, John. *(Pause.)* I’ll pay you tomorrow. *(Pause.)* I’m coming in here with the sales, I’ll pay you *tomorrow*. *(Pause.)* I haven’t *got* it, when I pay, the *gas*...I get back to the hotel, I’ll bring it in tomorrow.

**Williamson:** Can’t do it.<sup>74</sup>

Levene’s frustration, aggression and anxiety are growing towards the end of the bargain. Pauses in the speech of Levene are worth considering in terms of revealing his “aphasia” as Bigsby comments on : “Mamet’s principal notation, indeed, like Pinter’s, is the word ‘pause’, and meaning in his plays seems to exist as much in the threatening aphasia of his characters ( or, paradoxically, in the hysterical flood of language which suggests the pressure of the unspoken) as in the language with which they try to place themselves in a social drama which will liberate them from the threat of the experience.”<sup>75</sup> ‘Aphasia’, loss of the ability to articulate ideas or comprehend language,

<sup>73</sup> Tony J. Stafford , “**Visions of Promised Land**” in *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed, New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.193

<sup>74</sup> David Mamet, ***Glengarry Glen Ross***, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.8.

<sup>75</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, ***David Mamet***, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p. 65.

is the absolute situation of Levene in the face of American capitalism. As Bigsby pinpoints, not only the moments of ‘aphasia’ but also the pauses as ‘hysterical flood of language’ are all symptoms of deformed characters whose all abilities are totally captured by norms of the capitalism. Anne Dean evaluates the speech between Levene and Williamson as “...of all the speeches in the play, it is perhaps this one that most perfectly demonstrates the discourse of anxiety.”<sup>76</sup> Levene’s last words that end the Scene One were the most tragic ones:

**Levene:** Good. Mmm. I, you know, I left my wallet back at the hotel. Alright. Mmm. (Pause.) Mmm...Fine.<sup>77</sup>

Levene’s speeches can be taken as monologues since there is not any humanly response to his arguments. Moreover they are devices and tactics employed to reach a particular aim. As the writer himself expresses: “People only speak to get something...That’s the only reason anyone ever opens their mouth, on stage or off stage. They may use a language that seems revealing, but if so, it’s just a coincidence, because what they’re trying to do is accomplish an objective.”<sup>78</sup> In the light of this excerpt, it can be said that Levene’s monologues reveal the very key points of “mametspeak”; language or in his plays, ‘talk’, is a device used to access a particular aim/gain. Similar approach is seen in the first act of *American Buffalo* when Teach tries to persuade Don to reveal his plan. Seeing that Don does not want to unveil his plan, Teach starts to employ different strategies to ‘accomplish his objective’.

**Teach:** No? What is it, jewelry?  
**Don:** No. It’s nothing.  
**Teach:** Oh.  
**Don:** You know?  
**Teach:** Yeah. *Pause.* Yeah. No. I don’t know. *Pause.*  
Who am I, a policeman...I’m making conversation, huh?  
**Don:** Yeah.  
**Teach:** Huh? *Pause.*  
‘Cause you know I’m just asking for talk.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Anne Dean, “**The Discourse of Anxiety**” in *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed, New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.9.

<sup>78</sup> John Lahr, “**David Mamet; The Art of Theatre XI**” in *David Mamet in Conversation* Leslie Kane ed., United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 2001, p.110.

<sup>79</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.26.

Teach executes a highly hypocritical strategy in order to access what he wants. As it is mentioned above, in American business world, whatever you do for the sake of your benefits is laudable. Another equally important point about this speech is its resemblance to fallacious speech between Moss and Aaronow in *Glengarry Glen Ross*:

**Aaronow:** Yes. I mean are you actually talking about this, or are we just...

**Moss:** No, we are just...

**Aaronow:** We're just 'talking' about it.

**Moss:** We're just speaking about it. (Pause.) As an idea.

**Aaronow:** As an idea.<sup>80</sup>

At the beginning of the speech, Moss relaxes his partner that this is an innocent speech about 'robbery' yet at the end of the speech, we witness that Aaronow is trapped by his partner. Manipulation through lying is one the most recurrent unethical methods of the play. Mamet himself states that:

My main emphasis is on the rhythm of language – the way action and rhythm are identical. Our rhythms describe our actions – no, our rhythms *prescribe* our actions. I became fascinated – I still am- by the way, the way the language we use, its rhythm, actually determines the way we behave, more than the other way around.<sup>81</sup>

Language of Mamet's businessmen in both plays bears the same characteristics that 'prescribe' their actions. Language is in one hand a survival skill, on the other hand a way of action. Language is sometimes corrupted into a mere mean of getting what characters want. Mamet's businessmen in both *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* use language not to reveal the truth but to hide the truth. In the First Act of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the verbal war of Levene which hides the main agendas is nothing but mean of getting what he wants. Levene shouts that "...that's 'talk'. Our Job is to sell":

**Williamson:** My job is to marshal those leads...

**Levene:** Marshal the leads...marshal the leads? What the fuck, what bus did you get off of, we're here to fucking

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<sup>80</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Ross Wetzsteon, "New York Letter", *Plays and Players* 23, no.12, September 1976: p.39.

sell. Fuck marshaling the leads. What the fuck talk is that?...Where did you learn that? In school...(Pause) That's 'talk,' my friend, that's 'talk.' Our job is to sell.

As it is clearly seen at the end of the scene, Levene is an elderly salesman who made good deals in his youth but now a loser who lost his ability to sell by 'talk'ing. Since he loses his 'survival skill' to dominate others, he turns out to be an unsuccessful seller who even could not persuade his boss. His confrontation with that lack of ability naturally leads the sarcasm, anxiety and anger of the speech. Anne Dean suggests that it is instructive to examine delineation of the three main relationships. Afore mentioned relationship between Levene and Williamson in Act One, Scene One is the first of these relation patterns. Relation between Dave Moss and George Aaronow, and that of between Ricky Roma and James Lingk is determined categories of dramatizing anxiety.<sup>82</sup> The first relationship pattern of director and worker is resulted in the failure of the worker. Another war of 'talk' starts between Dave Moss and George Aaronow in the Second Scene.

In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Act One, Scene Two opens when Dave Moss and George Aaronow sit at a Chinese restaurant. Another chapter of speaking 'to get something' starts with their speech. At the First Scene, Levene's whole speech is to persuade Williamson to give him best deals, similarly at this scene Moss' whole speech is to persuade Aaronow to rob the company office. At the beginning of the speech, Moss refers to their sufferings as salesmen:

**Moss:** The whole fuckin' thing...The pressure's just too great. You're ab...you're absolu...they're too important. All of them. You go in the door. I... 'I got to *close* this fucker, or I don't eat lunch.' 'Or I don't win the *Cadillac*...' ...we fuckin' work too hard. You work too hard. We all, I remember when we were at Platt...huh? Glen Ross Farms...*didn't* we sell a bunch of that...?<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Anne Dean, "**The Discourse of Anxiety**" in *David Mamet's Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed, New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.48

<sup>83</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.11

Moss' speech has twofold importance; first, his speech can be seen as a cry of an angry worker whose extreme 'aphasia' is deduced from his fragmented, broken, abusive sentences. Second, his speech can also be taken as a means of the exploitation of a naïve worker. What Moss says until his proposal of robbing the office are deceptive tactics for brainwashing. Given system of American business abolishes all the humanly relationships such as camaraderie, and moreover forces Moss to see his partner as commodity which he would benefit from. Moss thinks that something should be done to that system and his offer is stealing the leads (addresses):

**Moss:** I want to tell you what somebody should do.

**Aaronow:** What?

**Moss:** Someone should stand up and strike *back*.

**Aaronow:** What do you mean?

**Moss:** *Somebody...*

**Aaronow:** Yes...?

**Moss:** Should do something to *them*.

**Aaronow:** What?

**Moss:** Something. To pay them back.

*Pause.*

Someone, someone should hurt them. Murray and Mitch.

**Aaronow:** Someone should hurt them.

**Moss:** Yes.

*Pause.*

**Aaronow:** How?

**Moss:** How? Do something to hurt them. Where they live.

**Aaronow:** What

*Pause.*

**Moss:** Someone should rob the office.<sup>84</sup>

Oddly enough, capitalism subjugates the minds of the workers to such a great extent that robbery would also serve for the benefit of capitalism in turn. They would steal the leads and sell them to another real estate office and at the end those useless, worthless farms in Glengarry are sold to gullible victims and If not Murray and Mitch, this robbery will turn out to be profit for another real estate owner. Capitalism is looking for exploitable workers on the other hand workers who are alienated to each other are looking for other workers to exploit. Moss's attitude demonstrates how capitalism 'dispossesses' its members both economically and spiritually. Bigsby observes Mamet's approach as such:

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<sup>84</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001 p.16



“He writes, for the most part, about the spiritually dispossessed, about the people who are alienated products of capitalism (‘an idea whose time has come and gone’), and of their substitution of fantasy for will, sensation for relationship. He sets out to dramatize a society that seems to have severed its links with the past (which survives only as debased myth) and to lack a vision of the future (except in its vague promises of sexual, moral and material liberation). His are characters who live their lives through a series of denials.”<sup>85</sup>

Bigsby’s observations about general aspects of Mamet’s approach can be specifically adapted to the plays, *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* since both of them dramatize the microcosm of a bleak profit-driven society. ‘Spiritually dispossessed’ characters of Mamet lose their ways due to the side effects of capitalism such as corruption, alienation, commodity fetishism and betrayal. Capitalism creates its own institutions and its own type of human beings. It betrays the employees under the veil of a gilded ‘dream’, on the other hand it forces employees to betray each other in their interminable war to reach that dream. *American Buffalo* illustrates how humanly attitudes as friendship, loyalty and honesty are vanished in the face of business. In the Act I of *American Buffalo*, Don teaches his apprentice that business is ‘taking care of themselves’; in a broader sense, a profit-driven egoist attitude is mentioned:

**Don:** Well, that very well may be, Bob, but the fact remains that it was business. That’s what business is.

**Bob:** What?

**Don:** People taking care of themselves. Huh? <sup>86</sup>

In both plays, it can be observed that friendship collapses as soon as self-interest arises. Excessive regard for personal profit gives rise to moral hazard. In the Act One of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Levene tries hard to betray Williamson by offering a bribe, on the other side Williamson tries hard to betray him by demanding much more money; in the Scene Two, Moss tries hard to betray Aaronow by ensnaring him to commit that crime. In the Third Scene, we will see that how Roma betrays his client by encouraging him to buy worthless swampland as a profitable investment. At the beginning of the *American Buffalo*, Don and Bob display speech of genuine friendship or father-son bond since

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<sup>85</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.18.

<sup>86</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p. 6.

Don warns him that he should not skip breakfast, smoke and drink too much coffee. Don wants him to take vitamins but Bob does not want because he thinks that they are too expensive. At this point Don offers to buy him vitamins and he adds: "...I just can't use you in here like a zombie"<sup>87</sup>. It can be deduced that Don's benefaction of buying vitamins to Bob in turn will serve for his own benefit. Capitalist world view requires being generous if the thing you give will turn you as profit. Businessmen have to be healthy so that the system can use them more efficiently.

Mamet's characters try hard to accommodate with the criteria of the established business ethic in order to survive. However, Aaronow in *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a divergent and atypical character to some degree. Mamet also thinks that Aaronow is the only character coming closest to being 'raisonneur'. As a character who displays more detached view of the action than the other characters, Aaronow has great difficulty in 'grasping' and implementing the necessities of that capitalist system; he is perplexed by the operation of it. For Mamet, Aaronow is likely to be a 'raisonneur':

"...for throughout the whole play he's saying, "I don't understand what is going on," "I'm no good," "I can't fit in here," "I'm incapable of either grasping those things I should or doing those things that I've grasped." Or his closing lines, "Oh, God, I hate this job." It's a kind of monody throughout the play. Aaronow has some degree of conscience, some awareness. He's troubled. Corruption troubles him."<sup>88</sup>

Since Aaronow does not affirm the standards of the business structure, it can be said that he is an "unfavorable variation" in the face of the system and destined to be failed. Although Aaronow's name is not on the board, which means that he is likely to be fired, Aaronow still resists committing act of stealing. As Mamet explains he 'has some degree of conscience'. It can be easily deduced from his replies to Moss:

**Aaronow:** Because, because, you know, it's a *crime*.

**Moss:** That's right. It's a crime. It is a crime. It's also very safe.<sup>89</sup>

Moss acts as an eager practitioner of the system he belongs to. In this sense, Moss' approach is metaphorical yet Aaronow's is an individual denial of the realities. At this

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p. 179.

<sup>89</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p. 18

point, the collapse of the sense of comradeship is seen, since for Moss Aaronow is nothing but a commodity that can be exploited. The system is so virulent that if you happened to involve in any interaction or if you happened to ‘listen’ to its discourse you have not got any chance except being guilty:

**Moss:** .....My end is *my* business. Your end’s twenty -five. In or out. You tell me, you’re out to take the consequences.

**Aaronow:** I do?

**Moss:** Yes.

*Pause.*

**Aaronow:** And why is that?

**Moss:** Because you listened.<sup>90</sup>

As a recurrent theme, betrayal is again at work in these lines. System is so sophisticatedly organized that you may be a victim at any time. Dean’s comments about the general aspects of characters’ abuse of language for the sake of their own interests are worth to be noted:

“Corrupted by the constant need to beat their colleagues at any cost, these men have become expert manipulators....there is a world in which loyalty and trust have almost no place and where language can no longer be trusted as a means of straightforward communication. Merely listening to the wrong words can mean dire consequences, as Aaronow finds to his cost.”<sup>91</sup>

Dean’s observations about Mamet’s characters are absolutely true for both *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo*. In the latter Teach’s manipulative discourse for learning Don’s robbery plan and his word play to confuse Don’s mind about Bob is mentioned above. Moreover, Bigsby draws attention to Mamet’s description of Teach as ‘friend and associate’ and he comments that this description indicates the synonymy between friendship and business utility.<sup>92</sup> Speaking for *American Buffalo*, ‘business utility’ not only substitutes for friendship but also subjugates it. Teach’s speech ‘can no longer be trusted as a means of straightforward communication’. Following quotation of Teach exemplifies the collapse of language as a means of communication:

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<sup>90</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 200, p.23

<sup>91</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p.193

<sup>92</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.75.

**Teach:** In your mind you don't, but the things, I'm saying, that you actually go do for him. This is fantastic. All I mean, a guy can be too loyal, Don. Don't be dense on this. What are we saying here? Business.

.....

(Pause.)

We both know what we're saying here. We both know we're talking about some job needs more than the kid's gonna skin -pop in there with a *crowbar*...

Bob and Don originally plan robbery by but Teach convinces Don to exclude Bob from robbery. The father-son bond between Don and Bob is quickly ignored for the sake of 'business' considerations. As befitting to this scene, famous director Carey Perloff points out that "The ethics of business, the business of ethics, the drive to get ahead at the expense of those you love most....they are the calling cards of David Mamet."<sup>93</sup> After excluding Bob from the break-in, Don decides to include a third person, Fletcher, in order to give 'depth' on the team. Teach as a good businessman does not want to share the profit with Fletcher however, he reluctantly accepts him. At this point, they start to mention the robbery as 'three-men jobs'.<sup>94</sup> These 'petty crooks' become absorbed in the idea of 'business' to such extent that they rationalize 'three -men job' as 'division of labor'; 'security, muscle and intelligence'<sup>95</sup>. Ironically, would-be criminals in *American Buffalo* consider themselves as 'businessmen' and give long tirades about how a good business should be. Mamet himself points out in a television interview that "...this wonderfully unhappy country of ours has never decided what a crime is and what is not."<sup>96</sup> In both plays crime and business are amalgamated moreover, they are metaphors of each other, too. Teach, so-called businessman, goes on to lecture on the essential points of 'business':

**Teach:**...All that I'm saying, don't confuse business with pleasure<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Qtd in "**Glengarry Glen Ross, a Play by David Mamet**", Schepps Dairy's Project Discovery Study Guide, <[http://www.dallastheatercenter.org/PublicDocs/Glengarry\\_Glen\\_Ross.pdf](http://www.dallastheatercenter.org/PublicDocs/Glengarry_Glen_Ross.pdf)>

<sup>94</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.53.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>96</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p.87

<sup>97</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p. 34.

These salesmen are direct results, mirrors and transmitters of the system they belong to. Dean explains that everything can be justified by relating to a business context; "...a specific target for Mamet's satire in the play is what he considers to be the corrupting and dangerous influence of the American business ethic; by relating bad behaviour to a business context, almost anything can be excused."<sup>98</sup> It is important to notice that in *American Buffalo*, theft is repeatedly mentioned as 'business' and 'job'. In the 'Darwinian jungle' every crime is justified for the sake of personal gain. Salesmen are also gullible victims of the system which forces its own way of existence upon them. Despite their 'amorality', David Mamet does not consider them as criminals but as reflections of the external forces: "...the code of an institution ratifies us in acting amorally, as any guilt which might arise out of our acts would be borne not by ourselves but shared out through the institution... ( If these acts) are done in the name of some larger group, a state, a company, a team ( then) those vile acts are somehow magically transformed and become praiseworthy."<sup>99</sup> In this sense, it can be discussed that in the play, code of the institution -American capitalism in a larger sense- determines all the sub-codes such as code of language, ethic and relationship.

Another 'praiseworthy' attempt of manipulation is presented in the Scene Three with the introduction of successful salesman Ricky Roma whose name is at first on the board. As it is mentioned before, it is hard to free ourselves from the virus of the system because nowhere is safe. In the previous scene, Aaronow is manipulated by Moss only because he 'listened' to him, at this scene another victim, James Lingk is manipulated only because he is sitting next to Ricky Roma in a restaurant. Scene Three is the last scene of 'manipulation' series in the Act One. Roma, also called as 'Tricky Ricky', employs his talents of capturing the mind of the victim and stressing out his insecurities and encouraging him to do something for himself before being too late:

**Roma:** .....when you die you're going to regret the things you don't do.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p. 91.

<sup>99</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.123.

<sup>100</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.24

Roma, as an effective ‘manipulator’, highlights his victim’s passivity towards life. He tries to break all the norms of ‘morality’ by advocating that whatever he wants to do is true even if it is cheating on your wife or being ‘thief’. He says:

**Roma:** There’s an absolute morality? May *be*. And *then* what? If you *think* there is, then *be* that thing. Bad people go to hell? I don’t *think* so. If you think that, act that way. A hell exists on earth?”<sup>101</sup>

In fact, for Roma “a hell exists on earth” also, the hell of American capitalism in which he tries hard to seem as strong, powerful and man on the top of the ‘board’ but unfortunately there is no way out of that hell. This fallacious state of consciousness mentioned by Anne Dean as such:

“In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Mamet’s salesmen spill out their endless, brilliant chatter to anyone who is prepared to listen but at the heart of their manipulation lies aridity and emptiness. Behind the foul-mouthed, incessantly “macho” bravado lies a desperate bluster, a braggadocio show of power by men who are only too aware of their own powerlessness. They may live by victimizing their colleagues and clients, but the most abject victims of their trade are themselves.”<sup>102</sup>

Anne Dean draws attention to the hidden identities and situations of the salesmen by revealing what lies beneath is nothing but ‘aridity’ and ‘emptiness’. This is also analogous to Mamet’s revelation of ‘American myth’ as ‘idea of something out of nothing’. Vicious circle of business system deliberately creates illusions in the consciousness of the salesmen. Those illusions prevent them from attaining a real perception about their existence and fate. Roma is the youngest of all other salesmen. He is in his forties. What everybody knows but Roma does not is his unavoidable fate which will further put him in a situation similar to that of ‘Levene’, when he reaches his ‘fifties’. His glory over his colleagues and victims is destined to come to an end and at that time the system is automatically throw him sideline. However for the time being, Roma vigorously plays the game according to its rules. Due to the lack of established

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p. 194.

norms of ethics to guide salesman, Roma creates his own ethical judgement system which serves his aims best. He confesses this attitude as such:

**Roma** : ...'If it happens, AS IT MAY for that is not within our powers, I will *deal* with it, just as I do *today* with what draws my concern today.' I say *this* is how we must act. I do these things which seem correct to me *today*. I trust myself. And if security concerns me, I do that which *today* I think will make me secure. And every day I *do* that."

Roma's provocative reveal of how to secure himself gives the very essence of perception of ethic among salesmen: "which seem correct to me today." Such an individualistic appreciation of ethics dramatically clashes with the societal values and communality concerns. However, salesmen have been left alone in the business system and devoid of any clear moral compass to follow. He also confesses this approach strike deep roots in his 'everyday' conduct and turns out to be a 'habit' and nature of his occupation. Ironically enough, Roma's talent in selling and his higher position on board shows that he is doing what he must do and is supposed to do. Until the very last speeches in the Scene Three, we have not known that the man Roma is sitting next to is a salesmen or a client. The speech resolves at the very end when they introduced themselves to each other. Roma reveals his hidden intention, previously veiled by philosophical arguments throughout the scene:

**Roma:** Well, let's have a couple more. My name is Richard Roma, what's yours?

**Lingk:** Lingk. James Lingk.

**Roma:** James. I'm glad to meet you. (*They shake hands.*) I'm glad to meet you, James. (*Pause.*) I want to show you something. (*Pause.*) I might mean nothing to you...and it might not. I don't know. I don't know anymore. (*Pause. He takes out a small map and spreads it on the table.*) What is that? Florida. Glengarry Highlands. Florida. 'Florida.Bullshit.' and maybe that's true; and that's what I said: but look *here*: What is this? This is a piece of land. Listen to what I'm going to tell you now: <sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.26.

After showing the map of the lands, Roma says “that’s what I said”; this is a confession in fact. In a real sense throughout the speech what he said is the “Florida” and “Glengarry Highlands”. Although they sound different for Link, all the uttered words serve for the aim of persuading him and are merely pieces of a large organized attack of a manipulator designed to sell. The dialogue between Roma and Link gives us a picture of ‘trade crime’ in which customer is trapped by a greedy seller. Since the real estate office does not develop an ethically organized interaction scheme between buyers and sellers, buyer’s economic and emotional disillusionment and dissatisfaction at the end of a disadvantageous purchase is not taken into account. Throughout the play, act of ‘selling’ turns out to be a metaphor of crime. Leslie Kane refers to the act of selling as ‘seduction’:

“Everyone in Glengarry exists potentially to be “sold”: the customers, the salesman, even the audience. Thus both acts end with a magisterial “selling” job by Ricky Roma, in which the audience too is “buffaloed”: in act one when we ultimately realize that Roma’s conversation with James Link is not simply a philosophical chat with a stranger over a drink but the cunning seduction of a sales pitch, and more lethally in act two, when “tricky Ricky” suddenly and viciously betrays his self-proclaimed “friend” and “partner” Levene.”<sup>104</sup>

Leslie Kane’s argument of ‘everyone in Glengarry exists potentially to be ‘sold’ is totally realized at the end of the play. There emerges a drift situation in which it is hard to determine who the real victim is.

The colons as the last signals of Scene Three deserve to be focused on; Dean evaluates ‘the colons’ as such: “It is no accident that Mamet ends this speech with a colon rather than a period; Roma’s patter is relentless and without mercy. He will go on and on until Link finally capitulates and offers to buy some land. The unfortunate man is trapped; he has no choice but to “listen” to whatever Roma hurls at him.”<sup>105</sup> After reading the last lines of Roma and noticing the colon we are sure that Roma is going to win the battle. He draws such a consume-oriented world view that as Dean states Link

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<sup>104</sup> Hersh Zeifman, “**Phallus in Wonderland: Machismo and Business in David Mamet’s American Buffalo and Glengarry Glen Ross,**” in *David Mamet A Casebook* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Garland Publishing, 1992, p.131-132

<sup>105</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p.206



‘has no choice’ except submit the attacks of Roma. Paradoxical relation between the salesmen and the clients is explained as a “vicious circle” by her. She notes that:

“Just as the salesmen’s lives are fuelled by the promise of happiness and contentment in return for material success, so too are the lives of their clients; the clients are as much a part of the capitalist hegemony as the men from whom they purchase their symbols of material success. Their purchases are invested by the salesmen with amazing, life-enhancing properties that somehow hold the promise of a better future. The truth is, however, usually rather different. In the same way as the salesmen’s endless quest for spurious success is essentially a chimera, so the goods they sell are probably quite worthless. The salesmen are, therefore, exploiting those who, like them, need to dream and to believe in brighter future. It is a vicious circle.”<sup>106</sup>

As a vivid sample of afore mentioned ‘vicious circle’, together with the previous scenes, Scene Three ends with a triumph of exploiters who are already being exploited. Scene Three is the last of the manipulation trilogy in Act One. Three scenes of Act I, seemingly, bear no relation with each other; however, they all have relations with the macrocosm they reflect. Act I can be taken as the panorama of ‘dispossessed characters’ who incessantly rush to be possessed in the labyrinth of capitalism.

Act II is not divided into scenes; setting shifts to the real estate office. Stage description is “*the Real Estate Office. Ransacked. A broken plate glass window boarded up, glass all over the floor. Aaronow and Williamson standing around, smoking.*”<sup>107</sup> Act II, presents the salesmen in their own office with a police detective, Baylen who came to interrogate them about the robbery. The act of robbing and the robber is not revealed in the play. Steven Price points out that connection between business and crime ‘is an open secret’<sup>108</sup>. He goes on to explain the situation in the early Act II: “The detritus-strewn set of the Second Act encapsulates this contradiction, as Roma tries to conduct business as usual while the police conduct a criminal investigation in the next room.”<sup>109</sup> Price refers to Roma’s tricky tactics in order to persuade Lingk who comes to office in order to cancel the sale at the time of interrogation. On the other hand, in Act II, Levene also comes into the office with a great excitement since he has just sold eight

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.189.

<sup>107</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.27

<sup>108</sup> Leslie Kane ed., *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance*, New York.: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.5

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.6.

units. This process of “selling” is somehow a ‘crime’ in terms of abusing the clients’ needs and dreams, it is not ethical. In this sense, the act of burglary is considered as “symptomatic of a general condition and an ordinary moment.”<sup>110</sup> American business ethic is based on the logic that everything can be justified if it takes to you to triumph. On the other hand, main ignition of the unrealized robbery in *American Buffalo* is Don’s suspect of being deceived by the coin dealer who pays 90 dollars for buffalo-head nickel. Don sells the nickel for 90 dollars but when the deal is finished he starts to think that he is exploited because according to Don it is worth much more. This perception of deceit vindicates forthcoming deceptions. As it is known, the very core of business is the interaction of business and customer. In the both plays, this business-customer relation is hypocritical and deceitful. For *American Buffalo*, Don wants his buffalo-head nickel back because he was not able to deceive his customer, on the contrary Don believes that he is deceived. Given moral problem at this point is not the act of deceiving but the actor. According to the system, customer is supposed to have weaker position and must be in disadvantage position at the end of the bargain. In this sense, what Don wants to take back is not solely a buffalo-head nickel but also his self-respect as a seller. For *Glengarry Glen Ross*, manipulating the clients by telling lies, bribery, betraying or stealing can be justified in order to be ‘on board’. In the following lines Levene himself expresses how he manipulates the clients to buy ‘something they don’t even want’:

**Levene:** ....that’s cold calling. Walk up to the door. I don’t even know their name. I’m selling something they don’t even want. You talk about soft sell...before we had a name for it...before we called it anything, we did it.<sup>111</sup>

At the very core of the capitalism, there is an absolute aim of creating illusionary needs of something that is not necessarily needed in fact. Unavoidable instinct to consume is successfully stirred up by the agents such as media, advertisements or by a direct link as ‘salesmen’. David Worster explains this consumer-psyche as such:

“The salesmen may be selling something consumers don’t even want, but the ideology of capitalism posits that happiness is purchasable and whatever needs the customers do have can be met within the system:

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>111</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.44.

just buy the right material possessions as quickly as possible, and you will be happy. The salesmen exploit that belief to meet their own far more desperate needs; they are involved in a cutthroat sales competition and have an urgent need to act – to talk in order to sell - NOW.”<sup>112</sup>

At the beginning of the Second Act, we have witnessed the Levene’s excitement of his glory over Nyborhs. He deceits them by selling worthless lands as profitable investment. By the time Levene is manifesting his achievement, Roma sees James Link outside the window and play-in-play starts. Roma wants Levene to act as if he is a client of him who has bought five waterfront Glengarry Farms. As soon as Link comes into office, simultaneously written sketch of Levene and Roma starts. Roma introduces Levene as D. Ray Morton, director of all European Sales and Services for American Express. By diverting Link to think they are eligible businessmen and they have to catch the plane at the time being, Roma tries to get out of the office in a rush since he is quick-witted enough to foreseen that Link wants to cancel the deal. As soon as you have an interaction with any agenda of the system, it is impossible to get out of that ‘circle’ anymore, as in the case of James Link. What happens afterwards the ‘colon’ at the end of the Act I-Scene III is understood in the second act II, when James Link openly declares “...My wife said I have to cancel the deal.”<sup>113</sup> Link’s wife informs him that in three days time they have right to cancel the deal, if not she would apply to Consumer Rights Attorney. Roma, as usual, lies to him while saying that he has time to cancel the deal yet on Monday Link will lose his right to cancel the deal. On seeing that Link does not believe him, Roma lies that his check has not been cashed therefore Roma insists that they may ‘talk’ about this on Monday. Things get worse when detective Baylen opens door and calls Levene, who is pretending to be D. Ray Morton at that time, for interrogation. Link states that he has no ‘power to negotiate’ and that’s his wife’s demand to cancel the deal. Upon this revelation Roma starts to divert his attention with his philosophical speeches:

**Roma:** *Forget the deal, Jimmy. ( Pause.) Forget the deal...you know me. The deal’s dead. Am I talking about the deal? That’s over. Please. Let’s talk about you. Come on. (*

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<sup>112</sup> David Worster, “How to Do Things with Salesmen David Mamet’s Speech -Act Play,” in *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.69.

<sup>113</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p. 48

*Pause. Roma rises and starts walking toward the front door .)*  
 Come on, Jim (*Pause.*) your life is your own. You have a contract with your wife. You have certain things you do *jointly*, you have a *bond* there...and there are *other* things. Those things are yours. You needn't feel *ashamed*, you needn't feel that you're being *untrue*...or that she would abandon you if she knew, this is your life. (*Pause.*) Yes. Now I want to *talk* to you because you're obviously upset and that *concerns* me. Now Let's go. Right now. <sup>114</sup>

As it is seen above, Roma does not give any chance to Lingk even he can not finish his word 'yest...' Roma's decisive act of manipulation is interrupted by Williamson when he states that they cash the check:

**Lingk:** What are the police doing here...?  
**Williamson:** we had a slight burglary last night.  
**Roma:** It was nothing...I was telling Mr.Lingk...  
**Williamson:** Mr. Lingk. James Lingk. Your contract went out. Nothing to...  
**Roma:** John...  
**Williamson:** Your contract went out to the bank.  
*Pause.*  
**Lingk:** You cashed the check?  
**Williamson:** We...  
**Roma:** ...Mr. Williamson...  
**Williamson:** your check was cashed yesterday afternoon. And we're completely insured, as you know, in any case.  
*(Pause.)*  
**Lingk (to Roma):** you cashed the check?  
**Roma:** Not to my knowledge, no...  
**Williamson:** I'm sure we can...  
**Lingk:** Oh, Christ...( He starts out the door.) Don't follow me...Oh,Christ...(Pause. To Roma.) I know I've let you down. I'm sorry. For...forgive...for...I don't know anymore.(Pause.) Forgive me. (Lingk exits.) (Pause.) <sup>115</sup>

As it can be guessed that immediately after Lingk exists, Roma turns his all anger towards Williamson since he devastates all Roma's efforts by revealing the truth. All the mechanism of trade based on the telling lies and creating illusionary needs towards what are not needed truly. Williamson is harshly scolded by Roma since he does not successfully fulfill his mission. Roma openly implies what he is hired for:

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p.55.

<sup>115</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001,p.56-57.

**Roma:** Anyone in this office lives on their *wits*....What you're hired for is to *help* us – does that seem clear to you? To *help* us. *Not* to fuck us up...to help *men* who are going *out* there to try to earn a *living*. You *fairy*. You company man...<sup>116</sup>

As an agent of the system, Williamson is supposed to notice what they are trying to do in Lingk's case. Levene as a man living on his wits quickly starts playing his role given by Roma but Williamson since he is a 'fairy' 'company man' who never goes out for living fails to notice what is going on. Their job experience and familiarity with the business system enable them to employ quick-witted maneuvers serving to their unethical aims of betrayal and manipulation. However, as Bigsby states the spirit of the enterprise diverts them to such an unethical conduct:

"There is, behind Mamet's *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, a consistent critique of American values, of a promise that has become the basis of betrayal, of a spirit enterprise that has degraded in the direction of crime. History exists and is invoked but has no functional value. Something has disrupted a moral continuity. His America, once invented by a gentleman farmer, is now reinvented by petty criminals (*American Buffalo*), depressives (Edmond), and confidence tricksters (*Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Shawl*).<sup>117</sup>

Both petty criminals of *American Buffalo* and tricksters of *Glengarry Glen Ross* are the main composers of modern America. Early ideals of foundation 'has no value' since they are all replaced by the new ones of capitalistic American dream. This new structure, free from any ethical norms, leaves individuals alone in their decision-making and implementing operations. Lingk is betrayed by the promise of profitable investment opportunity and afterwards serial of betrayal follow in order to secure this deal. In this point, it is seen that unethical approach in business spread hierarchically from top to bottom.

As in the aforementioned scene of 'speech-act', the lives of the salesmen depend on their wits of talking effectively and decision-making simultaneously. Ironically enough, 'talking' that gives bread to salesmen brings Levene's end. While criticizing Williamson, Levene reveals that he knows that contract has not been sent to the bank but the only way to know this is to be in the office at night. Again in the play,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.57

<sup>117</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch and Cyrus R. K. Patell eds., *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Prose Writing, 1940-1990*, Volume: 7, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.65.

crime and business comes together, the concept of criminal and salesman turns out to be same as Robert H. Vorlicky states: "...Levene is exposed as robber; he hangs himself with his own words. In Mamet's world of men, thieves and salesmen are one and the same. They are all perpetrators of the corrupted American frontier ethic of exploitation in the name of the economic gain."<sup>118</sup> It is obviously seen in the play that being a good salesmen requires being a good liar or a good thief. That is a tragic moment for Levene that he not only reveals himself as a thief but also learns that his last deal with Nyborgs is a failure since Nyborgs are insane people who only like to talk with salesmen. Levene also reveals that Moss is his partner in that robbery. What Roma states after coming out of the detective's room are worthy to be noted:

**Roma:** " ....I swear...it's not a world of men...it's not a world of men, Machine...it's a world of clock watchers, bureaucrats, office holders...What it is, it's a fucked-up world...there's no adventure to it...(Pause.) Dying breed. Yes it is. (Pause.) We are the members of a dying breed. That's...That's..."<sup>119</sup>

'Dying breed' which can be likened to a 'wasteland' image is important to reveal the depth of the aridity. Apart from the individual sins of these salesmen, the play concentrates on to reveal where the biggest sin lies that's why at the end Roma is presented himself as a passive member of 'dying breed'. It may be convenient to remember Levene's futile plea to Williamson in Act One, Scene One. Williamson's indifference, is not an individual attitude of course, can be taken as triggering effect on Levene's metamorphosis. Benedict Nightingale points out that "Mamet does not demonize them as villains any more than he sentimentalizes them as victims."<sup>120</sup> As it is mentioned before real estate agent is a microcosm of the American capitalism which bears exploitation at its essence, therefore, salesmen turn out to be both conveyers and victims at the same time. Nightingale suggests that Mamet sympathizes with them since whatever they do –even immoral- is forced them to do by business system. Mamet himself expresses that "...the men I was working with could sell can cer...they were

<sup>118</sup> Robert H. Vorlicky, "**Men among the Ruins**" in *David Mamet's Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p.100.

<sup>119</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.64

<sup>120</sup> Benedict Nightingale, "**Glengarry Glen Ross**" in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet* Christopher Bigsby ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.96.

amazing. They were a force of nature. These men...were people who had spent their whole life in sales, always working for a commission, never working for a salary, dependent for their living on their wits, on their ability to charm. They sold themselves.”<sup>121</sup> David Mamet himself worked for a while in a real estate office in 1969 therefore he fully knows the very inner and outer aspects of those characters who ‘could sell cancer’. In an interview Mamet explains the ‘unethical’ity of this business world as such:

The play concerns how business corrupts, how the hierarchical business system tends to corrupt. It becomes legitimate for those in power in the business world to act unethically. The effect on the little guy is that he turns to crime. And petty crime goes punished; major crimes go unpunished.<sup>122</sup>

In the light of this comment about the play, it can be revealed that those salesmen struggle to live at the very bottom of that ‘hierarchical business system’ and their struggle directly shaped by the rules of that ‘hierarchical business system.’ That hierarchical business system creates its own salesmen typology. System is looking for salesmen, who are good at manipulating customers’ dreams; who are ready to betray their colleagues for the sake of their own profits, who sacrificed themselves for the running of the system. Throughout the play it can be observed that Ricky Roma is a successful salesman whereas Aaronow is not. Play ends with their dramatically diverse attitudes towards job:

**Aaronow:** (settling into a desk chair) Oh, god I hate this job.  
**Roma:** (simultaneous with ‘job’, going out of the office) I’ll be at the restaurant.<sup>123</sup>

Given stage descriptions reveal that Aaronow chooses to settle into a desk chair hopelessly and tired of what has happened. On the other hand, Roma is going to be at the restaurant where he can find new victims. Final revelation of Roma reminds us his

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<sup>121</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p. 196.

<sup>122</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p178 -179.

<sup>123</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.66.

dialogue with James Lingk. It foreshadows that system will go on to operate as in the past after getting rid of the 'exhausted' agents as Aaronow.

In *American Buffalo*, Act II starts at Don's Resale Shop at 11:15 that evening. Don is alone in the shop waiting for his associates to come and execute the robbery. Teach is late for the appointment. Bob unexpectedly comes to the shop and wants to sell a facsimile of buffalo-coin to Don without adding any profit. After Bob exits, Don and Teach goes on waiting for Fletcher. After a short time, Bob returns to the shop to inform them that Fletcher is mugged and taken to Masonic Hospital. Paranoid assumptions of Teach lead them to think that Bob is lying and that nickel is the original coin they want to steal. Don calls the hospital to ask if Fletcher Post is admitted to hospital. Learning that he is not in Masonic Hospital, *Teach grabs a nearby object and hits Bob viciously on the side of head*. According to Teach he has right to punish Bob severely since he ruins their robbery. The bond between Don and Bob is also ruined with Don's indifference towards Teach's brutal attack. Don's reaction towards this scene is highly apathetic: "You brought it on yourself."<sup>124</sup> Dean evaluates Don's imperturbable response to that brutality as conflict of interests: "...thus, even the tenuous love that exists between Don and Bobby can be stretched to the breaking point when business interests are at stake."<sup>125</sup> As Dean comments on the scene demonstrates how basic human relations are broken in the face of business. Teach as a typical prototype of American businessman declares what lies at the very core of the 'business':

**Teach:** You know what is free enterprise?

**Don:** No. What?

**Teach:** The freedom...

**Don:** ...yeah?

**Teach:** Of the Individual...

**Don:** ...yeah?

**Teach:** To Embark on Any Fucking Course that sees fit.

**Don:** Uh-huh...

**Teach:** in order to secure his honest chance to make a profit.  
Am I so out of line on this?

**Don:** No.

**Teach:** Does this make me a Commie?

**Don:** No.

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<sup>124</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.94.

<sup>125</sup> Anne Dean, *David Mamet Language as a Dramatic Action*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990, p.93.



**Teach:** The country's founded on this, Don. You know this.<sup>126</sup>

At this point, Teach teaches his associates and declares to us that citizens are free to exploit any chance that brings them profit. He vociferates that America is founded on that 'freedom of the individual to embark on'. Bigsby pinpoints the very 'foundation' of American business ethic by referring both 'petty gangster' in *American Buffalo* and 'the salesman' in *Glengarry Glen Ross*:

The supposed frontier virtues of a sturdy masculine self-sufficiency that took by force what was denied by right echoed in his plays by people who deploy rhetoric and dispose those myths in a world that has lost its epic dimensions. Perhaps the myths were always crude rationalizations, but at least the sheer scale on which they were enacted sustained the elevated language and concealed the extent of the moral affront. But, mimicked in his plays by the petty gangster and the salesman, they become ironic as well as immoral, while their deforming effect on the individual and the culture becomes more clearly apparent in pettiness of their projects and the patently self-destructive nature of their fantasies.<sup>127</sup>

Bigsby not only describes deeper aspects of the American myth of success but also verbalize the maleficent effects on individual and cultural levels. Both *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* can be partially taken as realist plays exploring the detrimental effects on contemporary society. On the other hand, they can be considered as absurd play referring to a world which 'lost its epic dimension'. Ironically named Teach draws his power by deceiving others. As it is observed in the course of the play, the more he deceives Don, the more he is likely to be central to the play and the robbery. It is also true for salesman in *Glengarry*, the more they deceive their clients and colleagues, the more they are likely to be top man on board. Tragic point is that this immorality is not emanated from the demerits of those individuals or deficiencies in their characters; established business system generates, breeds, feeds and reproduces this immorality. It diffuses into real estates, Junkshops, markets, banks, schools, hospitals, churches and so forth as a contagious disease. Since every malignity has a justification according to the accepted norms of business system, Teach is blind to his defects what is more he considers himself as a foggy reacting against the running of the

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<sup>126</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p. 72-73.

<sup>127</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p. 16.

world. Ironically enough, Teach bitterly experiences a moment of epiphany towards the end of the play:

**Teach:** The Whole Entire World.  
There is No Law.  
There is No Right and Wrong.  
The World is Lies.  
There is No Friendship.  
Every Fucking Thing. ( Pause.)  
Every God-forsaken Thing....  
**Don:** Calm down, Walt  
**Teach:** We all live like the cavemen. <sup>128</sup>

Teach previously declares that "...I am a business man, I am here to do business, I am here to face facts"<sup>129</sup>. Now it is time for him 'to face the facts'; the facts that there is no law and the world is lies. Teach shouts that modern men live like the cavemen. Metaphor of cavemen suits for the modern human beings who have no laws except hunting and gathering for themselves only. As it is seen in both plays, modern businessmen act like 'cavemen' who only care for primitive instincts. Therefore Mamet considers that American dream was basically 'raping' and 'pillaging'; "...we are finally reaching a point where there is nothing left to exploit....the dream has nowhere to go so it has to start turning to itself."<sup>130</sup> Teach verbalizes the very nihilistic vicious circle that Mamet refers; "...there is nothing out there. Pause. I fuck myself". Throughout the play, target of Teach's obscenity was towards his friends; Don, Bob, Fletcher, off-stage characters as Ruthie and Gracie however at the end of the play it turns to himself. David Savran puts forward that both *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* display 'a systematic process of brutalization',<sup>131</sup> Mamet's characters who are unable to reach their capitalistic dreams of wealth, can not tolerate the stimulants of the system any longer. *American Buffalo* has a metaphorical end where Don and Bob are presented on the destroyed stage. At the end of the plays characters are lost in the abysses of brutality of the American business. In the world of the American business system, characters are forced to behave in certain ways. Main motto of the competition in the capitalistic

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<sup>128</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.103.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>130</sup> David Savran, *In Their Own Words Contemporary American Playwrights*, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988, p.133.

<sup>131</sup> David Savran, *In Their Own Words Contemporary American Playwrights*, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988, p.133.

labyrinth of America is to gain profit at any cost regardless of any other ethical concerns. The short-term monetary gains overcome all the other moral gains. *Glengarry Glen Ross* 'ends with Levene's arrest, but business continues.'<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Don B. Wilmett and C. W. E. Bigsby, *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.369.

### 3.0 ANOMIE IN AMERICAN BUSINESS SYSTEM AS AN AFTERMATH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

The business world, presented in David Mamet's *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, is a successful and down-to-earth appliance of American business system into microcosmic settings. In this disclosure of the system, ethical conducts which are driven by the imperatives of American Dream and its aftermaths such as anomie and alienation and further ramifications as deviance/crime are conspicuously unveiled. Mamet's characters in the given plays bear contradictory dualities in terms of being both victims/sufferers and criminals/executers at the same time. In order not to suffer more they execute the demands of business system, however, the more they execute, the more they suffer due to the infiniteness of their dream. The handicaps of this execution process including preoccupation with 'by any means necessary', 'winner takes all' and so on cause them to suffer from distress, estrangement, solicitude in their per diem activities. They are day by day departed from the very humanly values since this process cannot be possible without immoral and unethical acts. Centrality of financial success, in comparison with other common virtues, preponderates and governs the concept of community and breaks individuals' bonds with his/her society, since the happiness is taught to be found only through monetary gains. Imperatives of the dream not only cause detachment from the ethical norms of socio-cultural environment but also inject the illusion of 'otherness'. Reconciliation in society, then, turns out to be impossible since presence of the 'other' is considered as a threat, or if not, perceived as a soulless property available to exploit. It is highly natural that if a socio-cultural structure gives the foremost priority to self-interest, unrest and incompatibility occur as soon as these interests coincide. For these reasons, coexistence becomes completely impractical and individuals are coerced to find their own ways to secure their own existence and happiness. The exaggerated promises of the American dream of success hypnotize the individuals and throw them into an illusionary world. However, By contrast, this illusionary world is strategically polished with the covenants of a dream, immensely clashes with the real world. Theoretic facet of the dream, which is filled with optimism and promise of openness to everyone, is in contradiction with the practice in the restricted structure of the system. The discourse of the dream seems

romantic when the material condition of reality, namely its non -applicability, is taken into account. In this sense, it would not be wrong to consider American Dream as an oxymoron which combines highly contradictory terms. In reality, ‘America’ is not able to meet the feasibility of the ‘dream’; however it is the exact place to run after it. George Callin humorously emphasizes the paradox of the dream; “...the reason they call it the American Dream is because you have to be asleep to believe it.” <sup>133</sup>

In the course of the world history, American Dream has been recurrently presented by historians, men of arts, philosophers, politicians and economists. However, American Dream has remained as a controversial and ambiguous term, concept, theory or ideology. To some people, it is a means of perfection of the society through a set of social and moral ideals. To some others, it stands for the ultimate aim of success and wealth. The term ‘American Dream’ was first mentioned in James Truslow Adams’ **The Epic of America** (1931). In the epilogue, Adams put forwards that the contribution of America to the world is;

“The American dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”<sup>134</sup>

In his description of American Dream, Adams firstly pointed out the optimistic side of the dream by referring to its aspect of equal opportunity for everyone according to their ability. The umbrella of American dream embraces all citizens without any discrimination. Secondly, Adams mentioned the changing face of it; he made clear distinctions between individual self-gain which is symbolized with ‘motor cars and high wages’ and common good. Moreover, this romantic theory of American Dream did not fit into practice. Seeing that the practice of American Dream did not correspond to the hopes and expectations claimed in its theory, Adams revealed the ‘mistrust’ towards it.

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<sup>133</sup> George Carlin, **Brain Droppings**, New York: Hyperion, 1997, p.83.

<sup>134</sup> James Truslow Adams, **The Epic of America**, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1931, p. 404.

A highly discussed topic within American society, the ‘dream’ is considered to have its very origins in the Puritan/Protestant ethic which was first brought to American shores by the European settlers. At first, Puritan ethic celebrated the basic assumptions of the dream for the sake of public virtue, however, with the secularization of Puritanism, socio-political and economic concerns became prevailing. Ahmet Beşe addresses the interconnection between the birth of American Dream with the coming of the first emigrants as such: “ Dream of success, originated with the exploration of American continent, was at first considered as a second chance for reincarnation, revolution and opening the door to a new world. People coming to this extremely charming world with great hopes, also brought infinite dreams with them.”<sup>135</sup> As it is known, historically, United States has no hereditary aristocracies; it is a ‘nation of immigrants’ who came to achieve individual freedom and happiness in the New World. Although making money was the foremost incentive of emigrates, people of various races, religions and backgrounds were impressed by that promised freedom of self-expression and self-fulfillment. This New World promised that regardless of his birth, every one shall have the right to enjoy self-realization. By the same token, ‘Declaration of Independence’ with its direct emphasis on ‘pursuit of happiness’, is also regarded as one of the early impetuses of American Dream. The opening paragraphs of the document present both the essential principles of American nation and its dream: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>136</sup> The basic idea of the founding document of the nation puts forward that ‘life, liberty and pursuit of happiness’ is an individual right which shall be equally attained by every citizen. However, the meaning lying at the very core of the ‘pursuit of happiness’ changed in the course of the time. American Dream which was originally theorized and encouraged to form a holistic common well-being, transformed into a mere aim of pursuit of individual success. Puritan approach towards the Dream as the spiritual goal of receiving God’s grace, transformed into receiving material success over the time. It is a highly controversial concept because rhetoric of the dream publicizes that every individual has an equal opportunity to succeed in America as long as he/she

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<sup>135</sup> Ahmet Beşe, *Amerikan Tiyatrosunda Aile ve Başarı Düşü*, Ankara: De Ki Basım, 2007, p.36.

<sup>136</sup> Carl Lotus Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: a Study in the History of Political Ideas*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922, p.186.

works hard and ‘play by the rules’, yet ‘the rules’ are not publicized. At this point, the essential question of ‘What are these rules’ is replied by subjectively as fitting to individual aims and expectations.

Although it is philosophically defensible in terms of its benefits to constitute a prosperous society, subjective answers to the aforementioned question are the premises of individualism and pragmatism. Individualism supports that an individual is prior to any structure in a society. In this sense, his/her subjective appreciation of dream has priority over other realms of concern. In the heterogeneous and multicultural America, the dream’s aspect of collectivism as a national ideal was lost and priority of personal needs and demands emerged as a sole criterion. That’s why, individualism is regarded as the bedrock of laissez-faire economy. At this point, necessity of ‘rising from the masses’ showed itself. What’s more, individuals’ search of happiness somehow clashes with other individuals’ search of happiness, then, ‘succeed at the cost of someone else’ becomes inevitable. David Mamet who considers economic life in America as a lottery comments about ‘American myth’ as such:

“Instead of rising with the masses, one should rise from the masses. Your extremity is my opportunity. That’s what forms the basis of our economic life, and this is what forms the rest of our lives. That American myth: the idea of something out of nothing....one feels one can only succeed at the cost of someone else.”<sup>137</sup>

In the foundation period, the collective aim of ‘rising with the masses’ was at work. Under the harsh conditions of early settlement, solidarity was needed. Yet, with the coming of technological innovation on the path to industrialism, some citizens had the power of owning and controlling those means, while some had to lead their lives far away from this reality. The gradual estrangement of the dream from its spiritual roots accelerated and deepened with the rise of private ownership in the industrial period. Americans, in that time, were preoccupied with the anxieties of material property and status. Peasants immigrated to new industrial cities for the sake of actualizing their dreams since the dream promises that their fate was on their hand. Ironically enough, the fate of those industrious peasants was not changed but submitted to the hands of the

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<sup>137</sup> Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman eds., *Speaking on Stage, Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996, p.178.

capitalist owners. It was not only attractive for the Americans; people from all over world dreamed it and arrived to the land of opportunities. They sacrificed their foremost humane values and imagined that they would be prosperous, if they worked hard in America. Especially for immigrants, the American Dream had deep associations with risk-taking. Attracted by the gilded face of it, immigrants were ready to left behind and jeopardize what they had, even their 'identity' as Bigsby states

“The question of identity, after all, has a special resonance for those who have historically chosen to set themselves apart and have been set apart, those who in moving from one country to another have been invited to make subtle, and not so subtle, adjustments to the new world, sometimes at the price of losing a purchase on the old. The dream of inclusion may be shadowed by the nightmare of surrendered meaning. New freedoms may erode the frontier of the self, sever the very roots which sustained.”<sup>138</sup>

Sometimes, the reality may not come as it is anticipated as Bigsby writes dream may turn into nightmare. Conflict between the dream and the reality caused the collapse of the belief that shapes the essence of American dream; the motto of 'if you work hard enough and are talented enough you can achieve success' lost its credibility. In the course of the capitalism, existence of the bourgeois who do not need to work hard or to be talented in order to lead prosperity hampered the shared collectiveness of the holy dream. Class distinction emerged in the capitalist system made dramatic divergences in the perception of it. The American dream, as the salvation of the entire nation was challenged by the norms of capitalistic system and mutated into the personal salvation through material success.

When individualism is the issue, it will be convenient to refer John Locke (1632 - 1704) who gave aspiration to the Declaration of Independence with his assertions on individualism. His concept of liberalism insists that individuals have the capacity and right to make choices about their lives and should not be constrained in their pursuit of their material self-interest. Although originally theorized for the sake of common wealth, the idea of individualism embedded in the dream altered this communal point of view. American Dream was no more a means to lead good lives, but an aim of possessing properties which ends in itself. William James (1842-1910), as the founder

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<sup>138</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.7-8.



of American pragmatism and celebrator of American Individualism, which is deeply rooted in the American outlook, put forward that the criteria of ethic calculations can only be assessed relative to the 'truth' of individual. He states "...what is better for us to believe is true unless the belief incidently clashes with some other vital benefits ."<sup>139</sup> Everything that is considered as "better" and functional for individual is blessed by the pragmatist idea. In the 'rugged' version of American dream, as it is in pragmatism, material realities and their availability for the benefit of individual have priority over broader public benefits. At the Gilded age, those priorities were also supported by governmental policies. 'Robber Barons' who continued these business practices in an immoral and illegal method, came from middle class families and enjoyed the given economic freedom in the path of fulfilling their dream. With the accumulation of wealth in the privileged hands, inequality increased and faith in common wealth decreased. Despite their contributions to American economy, huge personal fortunes of these early industrialists had great deforming impact on shared national ideals. Justification of these corrosive practices was found in Social Darwinism. American Dream, with the defense of individualism, pragmatism and Social Darwinism, found its theoretical basis for necessity of 'pursuit property'. Evolution of holistic American dream towards individualistic concerns is reinforced by the growth of consumerism. Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) identified determining behaviors of American consumerism as "conspicuous consumption" in his book **The Theory of the Leisure Class** (1899). "Conspicuous consumption" was used to depict the behavioral elements of *nouveau riche* class who purchases goods in order to manifest their wealth and status. According to Veblen, consumerism is prompted by the mere aim of indication of their wealth to society. Veblen's approach reveals that display of wealth is vital for this class since the individuals' position in hierarchical order of society defined by accumulation of property and level of their status. Veblen's description of consumption is striking for presenting the role of property in manifesting status and Americans' striving for both material and social success. In this case, greater needs of the community were destroyed by the consumerist rampant individualism and materialism which justify the pursuit of personal gratification so it can be claimed that post-war American Dream has been fully determined by the national ethos of consumption.

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<sup>139</sup> William James, **Pragmatism**, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914, p.76.

The meaning of American Dream has changed throughout the history. In the course of the time, it is alienated from the ideal of perfection and well-being of society and has a new dimension in terms of material self-well-being. American Dream's period of estrangement from its original roots has been analogous to the differentiation of perceived reality and illusion in the minds of the citizens. The perception of reality and illusion; myth and truth have been perplexed. In the contemporary America, it is seen that social and economic realities do not fit to those of the myth. What Plato states in his book **The Republic**: "Virtue and wealth are balanced against one another in the scales; as the rich rise in social esteem, the virtuous sink"<sup>140</sup> exactly fits to the socio-cultural and economic balances of modern America. Plato's inverse proportion appears to be true when the squalors, sprung from the excessive accumulation of individual wealth, are taken into account. The inevitable temptation of personal profit overbalances other communal anxieties and gives way to corruption. An individual who is alienated from social responsibility and social consciousness has modified the reality according to requirements of his illusion(s). He reconstructs the truth not according to the universal norms of living but according to the business rules which serve this personal aims in turn.

The man who is left alone in the battlefield of American business system without any guidance, forced to reconstruct and redefine norms in keeping with his illusion(s). The man who is unable to establish conformity and orientation between reality and dream becomes frustrated and misled by the state of anomie. The term *anomie* was first used by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in **The Division of Labor in Society** (1893). His 1897 **Suicide**, one of the classics of sociological theories, presents anomie together with its subdivisions which are constant factors in suicide. Anomie, as an aftermath state of especially economic crisis, refers to the absence or weakness of social norms, values and regulation. In a broader sense, anomie is defined as "...great difficulties of individual adaptation, resulting in a loss of general social orientation, the development of feelings of insecurity and marginalization, uncontrolled rising expectations, feelings of relative deprivation and the questioning of the legitimacy of core social values."<sup>141</sup> Loss of social orientation caused by the normlessness and unregulated socio-economic structure form the very basis of anomie. Disorientated individuals are marginalized and

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<sup>140</sup> F.M. Cornford, **The Republic**, New York: Oxford University Press, 1945, p.274

<sup>141</sup> Marco Orrù, **Anomie: History and Meanings**, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 215

trapped between the pressure of their expectations -achievement of which is the sole criteria of success and happiness-and failures of it and they turns out to be skeptical about social values. 'Anomie' arises as individual and social unrest as a result of erosion of standards/values, namely 'normlessness'. Anomie is a macro -sociological problem which leads to individual's alienation from his/her backgrounds and collectivity. Durkheim's concept of anomie is defined as "insufficient normative regulation of individuals' activities, with the result that individuals do not feel attached to the collectivity."<sup>142</sup> His observations are based on the changing dynamics of industrialization; however, it would not be wrong to adapt it to the contemporary business system and its myths. When the sanctions of collectivity are disappeared then methods such as "the-end-justifies-the-means" or "by any means necessary" are rationalized and embraced which lead s to corruption, hostility, crime at the end. At this point, it can be claimed that the normless American Dream is the main incentive behind the confusion and alienation of citizens and gives way to the state of anomie in which citizens are compelled to employ illegal and immoral acts. Durkheim put a strong emphasis on the 'unlimited aspirations' and tragic ends of these aspirations in an 'unregulated' scheme;

Actually religion has lost most of its power. And government, instead of regulating economic life, has become its tool and servant...On both sides nations are declared to have the single or chief purpose of achieving...prosperity; such is the implication of the dogma of economic materialism, the basis of both apparently opposed systems. And as these theories merely express the state of opinion, industry instead of being still regarded as a means to an end transcending itself, has become the supreme end of individuals and societies alike. Thereupon the appetites thus excited have become freed of any limiting authority...Such is the source of the excitement predominating in this part of society, and which has thence extended to other parts. There, the state of crisis and anomy is constant and, so to speak, normal. From top to bottom of the ladder, greed is aroused without knowing where to find an ultimate foothold. Nothing can calm it, since its goal is far beyond all it can attain. Reality seems valueless by comparison with the dreams of fevered imaginations; reality is therefore abandoned, but so to is possibility abandoned when it in turn becomes reality. A thirst arises for novelties: Unfamiliar pleasures, nameless sensations, all of which lose their savor once known. Henceforth, one has no strength to endure the least reverse.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Jonathan H. Turner and Leonard Beeghly, *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*, Belmont CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002, p.343.

<sup>143</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Suicide:A Study in Sociology*, Trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951, p. 255-256.

Durkheim evaluates the 'state of crisis and anomie' as normal and natural outputs of a government that is a 'tool and servant of economic life'. He states that reality seems valueless in the face of dreams, 'since its goal is far beyond all it can attain'. The main conflict of American Dream is also the inconsistency between the dream and the truth. According to Durkheim 'unlimited aspirations' makes men to be greedy and unsatisfied. 'Nothing can calm' the greedy strivings of man and infiniteness of his dreams makes the satisfaction and happiness impossible. In this sense, he makes a clear distinction between the satisfied and modest "wise man" who knows the value of 'achieved results' and the man who cannot find any comfort in his life because of his greedy ever -lasting search of infinite dreams;

The wise man, knowing how to enjoy achieved results without having constantly to replace them with others, finds in them an attachment to life in the hour of difficulty. But the man who has always pinned all his hopes on the future and lived with his eyes fixed upon it, has nothing in the past as a comfort against the present afflictions, for the past was nothing to him but a series of hastily experienced stages. What blinded him to himself was his expectation always to find, further on, the happiness he had so far missed. Now he is stopped in his tracks; from now on nothing remains behind or ahead of him to fix his gaze upon. Weariness alone, moreover, is enough to bring disillusionment, for he cannot in the end escape the futility of an endless pursuit...We may even wonder if this moral state is not principally what makes economic catastrophes of our day so fertile in suicides<sup>144</sup>

Durkheim proposed that suicides are caused by aftermath depressions of the economic catastrophes. In the moment of epiphany, when the 'man' confronts with the failure in his greedy pursuit of happiness, suicide, crime and deviance are triggered. Durkheim presented that anomie stems from the condition of diminished values and lead to alienation, meaninglessness and suicide at the end. It is important to note that American Dream has also highlighted the future aspect of hope. Citizens do not dare to give up their pursuit although they confront with the reality sooner or later; illusion induces them to the possibility of achieving in the future. Americans, blind towards this reality, struggle hard for achieving the illusion, similar to Samuel Beckett's characters in *Waiting For Godot* who are trapped and fragmented in their endless and absurd anticipation of Godot. Harry Cohen's description of anomic people can be attributed to ones trapped in their futile search of material well -being:

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, Emile Durkheim, p. 256.

In the anomic drive for power, prestige, money and the materialistic things that these can buy...there is no end, no ultimate satisfaction...There is never enough because the accumulation of wealth is external, and the rewards are not internal in terms of deeper personal and personality gratification and such. In addition, wealth is always relative; there is always more to be had...he sees only more ahead, and keeps running, never reaching his goal. Anomic people do not know why they strive so, why they still miss something when they are richer and richer, their houses bigger and their earnings better... life remains truly meaningless.<sup>145</sup>

In the light of Cohen's excerpt, the dreamers of American dream can be labeled as "anomic". As it is stated before, the dream has been minimized into 'materialistic things' and accumulation of them has no end. Moreover, "running" but "never reaching his goal" is also another determining fate of the American dreamer. The mutual interaction between "aspiration" and the "means" of achieving it is directly referred by Robert K. Merton. Merton's theory of anomie was based on the lack of balance between the 'culturally approved goals' and the 'institutionally approved means of achieving these goals'. In his classic paper, "Social Structure and Anomie," Merton argued that "...our primary aim is to discover how *some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconforming rather than conforming conduct.*"<sup>146</sup> In his theory of anomie, he asserted that deinstitutionalization occurs when there is a detachment between cultural goals and institutional means (Merton, 1968, p. 189). Cultural goals are socially conformed expectations and aspirations -which is namely 'pursuit of property' in the context of American dream -; institutional means are socially verified ways of attaining these goals. Due to the excessive emphasis on financial success, Individual's ties with the society are unbound in his quest of self-interest and naturally they 'do not feel attached to the collectivity'. He calls for a balance between the goals and means to achieve them. Anomie is a state where "cultural (or idiosyncratic) exaggeration of the success-goal leads men to withdraw emotional support from the rules".<sup>147</sup> According to Merton, anomie follows the lack of regulating norms on the required means of achieving goals. His *Strain Theory* related to that of anomie, reveals that when the institutionalized means fail to regulate and compensate

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<sup>145</sup> Harry Cohen, *The Anomia of Success and the Anomia of Failure: A Study of Similarities in Opposites*, *The British Journal of Sociology* 23: 329-343, 1972, p.330-331

<sup>146</sup> Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York: The Free Press, 1968, p.186.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, Robert King Merton, p.190.

these norms, alternative means such as illegitimate and deviant ones are employed by people; he clearly states “It is the *combination* of the cultural emphasis and the social structure which produces intense pressure for deviation”<sup>148</sup> Merton sociologically explains the causes of illegal methods which is strongly rooted in the sanctions of American dream. Kimball King directly refers to such a kind of conflict in Mametian sense of anomie: “...overt physical violence is always regarded as deplorable in Mamet’s plays, which are sensitive to ethical issues and dramatize the conflict between individual needs and the demands of the community. It is never clear whether the individual in the community will survive this conflict.”<sup>149</sup> For Mamet’s plays, it can be observed that individual’s only way to survive this conflict is to indulge in deviance or being totally alienated (In the case of *Roma*, at the end of the play, he directly goes to the restaurant to find new clients, however Aaronow chooses to settling alone into a desk chair and says that “Oh, god I hate this job.”<sup>150</sup>).

Originating from the works of Durkheim and Merton, Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld hypnotized the *Institutional Anomie Theory* (IAT) which proposes that high crime rates can be explained by socio-cultural structure of a society. They put forward that American culture heavily fosters people to pursuit monetary success. Messner refers to the survival of the fittest aspect of this structure and places the dream in this context as such “...broad cultural ethos that entails a commitment to the goal of material success, to be pursued by everyone in society, under conditions of open, individual competition.”<sup>151</sup> As in the previously stated problematic aspect of American Dream, in terms of not defining what does ‘play by rules’ means, here, Messner emphasizes the normlessness of American dream. According to their theory, the rules are defined by four social institutions: the economy, the polity, the family, and the educational system. The structure of economy, basis to our study and to American Dream, is defined as capitalistic economy which bears main dynamics of American dream and cause of the high crime rates due to its domination over non-economic social institutions such as family, education and polity. American dream nourishes its

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>149</sup> Kimball King, “**Gradations of Criminality in the Plays of David Mamet**” in *The Art of Crime* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004, p.137.

<sup>150</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p.66

<sup>151</sup> Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld, *Crime and the American Dream*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994, p.69.

criminological influence by its stress on attainment of monetary success through competition in an unregulated system. Citizens suffer from anomic depressions, are led to criminality since the society whose norms are broken down and totally lost in terms of anomie cannot provide logical alternatives and set them free/without guidance in their search of dream and 'individual competition'. Institutional Anomie Theory suggests that crime in the U.S. is driven by extensive pressures to reach monetarily profit which is culturally verified as sole criteria of success.

David Mamet refers to anomie as "the sickness of the American Age."<sup>152</sup> In the labyrinth of American dream, Mamet's characters tragically suffer from this 'sickness' and present its symptoms as alienation, frustration, hostility, indifference and even crime. Physical, psychological and verbal violence in David Mamet's anomic characters have grown out of the aforementioned anomie, which creates a vacuum atmosphere in which the individuals have lost the proper ways of existence. Characters as the products of a culture which is constantly pumping the ideal of monetary gain and enforcing this as a sole metric of success, characters' feeling of stress and frustration leads inevitable and undesirable results. The recurrent aphasia, aggression and obscenity in language and behaviors of the characters emanate from the aforementioned exaggerated emphasis on monetary success and detachment from collectivity.

C.W.E Bigsby notes that Mamet himself told the director of a production of *American Buffalo* that "...the society hasn't offered them any context to be excellent in"<sup>153</sup>. Mamet's rationalization can be likened to that of Merton in terms of stressing out the importance of disconnection between social goals and the institutional means to realize them. It is also true for *Glengarry Glen Ross*; social structure puts strong emphasis on the success through money, however does not present the means. In the real estate in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, a competition among salesmen takes place at the end of which, top man wins Cadillac, the second man wins a set of steak knives, the bottom two men get fired. Salesmen who are devoid of ethical guidance are forced to act in accordance with their subjective norms of *consequentialism*. In consequentialism, moral standards of an action are measured according to its outcomes. This highly pragmatist approach can also be attributed to the concept of "the ends justify the

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<sup>152</sup> David Mamet, *The Wicked Son: Anti-Semitism, Self-hatred, and the Jews*, New York: Nextbook, 2006, p.89.

<sup>153</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.64.

means". In the opening scene of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Shelly Levene offers his boss, John Williamson, a certain percent from his commission as a bribe for taking best deals. Feeling the strong pressure of realizing his dream of success in a society that 'hasn't offered (him) any context', Levene's anomie is triggered and leads him to find illegal solutions of his own. At this point, crime comes into existence as a result of socio-economic structure. However, Williamson's response to the bribery is another example of deviance in the business system. Although, anomie was originally employed to reveal connection between economic conditions and suicide rates, in the course of the researches, it is also adapted to the American business system in terms of giving way to "white collar crime". The term "white-collar crime" was first coined by criminologist Edwin Sutherland in his 1939 American Sociological Society presidential speech; it is mentioned as "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation."<sup>154</sup> In this sense, Williamson's tendency towards bribery can be evaluated as a white collar crime which is an outcome of anomie in the business system. Similar to Durkheimian conception of normality of crime, Mamet considers these salesmen as "force of nature". Nature of the cultural goals and the means give rise to such deviant actions. Criminality may not be justified but rationalized in this context. The extraordinary accentuation of dream on monetary profit is the basic motive for Williamson's admittance of 'twenty percent of commission and a hundred bucks' bribery. For *American Buffalo*, crime is referred as a natural synonym of crime. At the outset of the play, the dialogue between Don Dubrow and his gopher Bob presents their robbery plan as a metaphor of business:

**Don:** Well, Bob, I'm sorry, but this isn't good enough. If you want to do business...If we got a business deal, it isn't good enough. I want you to remember this.<sup>155</sup>

All of the three characters of the play are outcasts who are striving for gaining monetary profit. Yet, the established socio-economic structure of contemporary America is far away from proposing them the acceptable means. Trapped between realizing their dream and conforming themselves to admissible social acts, the characters find their

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<sup>154</sup> Calvin J. Larson and Gerald R. Garret, *Crime, Justice, and Society*, Second Edition, California: Altamira Press, 1996, p.102

<sup>155</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.3.



own way of solution to this paradox by adopting a robbery plan. Social institutions fail to supply them with the required means, and then the robbery plan is embraced without considering its moral validity since “the ends justify the means”. Mamet can be considered as a social dramatist with regard to his exposure of capitalistic structure of America as impelling incitement to illegal actions: “American Dream has gone bad....it was basically raping and pillage. The idea was that if you got out there, as long as there was something to exploit – whether it was Wild West, the Negroes, the Irish, the Chinese in California, the gold fields, or the timberland - one had the capacity to get rich. This capitalistic dream of wealth turns people against each other.”<sup>156</sup> American dream’s inclination towards ‘raping and pillage’ forms the very core of Mametian sense of anomie. Anomie as a present state of America is recurrently observed in his plays. For example, fortune-tellers’ remarks in the opening scene of his play *Edmond* particularly refers to the anomic state of the world:

**Fortune-teller:** “You are not where you belong. It is perhaps true none of us are, but in your case this is more true than in most. We all like to believe we are special. In your case this is true. Listen to me. The world seems to be crumbling around us. You look and you wonder if what you perceive is accurate. And you are unsure what your place is. To what extent you are cause and to what extent an effect...”<sup>157</sup>

The belief of being ‘special’ takes its roots from the foundation myths of the country. For Mamet’s characters, the idea of being ‘special’ clashes with the material realities of that ‘crumbling’ world. At this point, incapability of perceiving what is ‘accurate’ causes the state of anomie in which characters are started to be led by their own frustration and bewilderment. There is a direct proportion between the expectations and the disappointment felt after failure. The greater expectations you have, the greater disappointment you feel. Bigsby points out the catastrophic position of Mamet’s characters as such “...they are stranded in a world which generates anxiety and alarm and which offers nothing but fantasy to assuage them. They have lost control of their lives.”<sup>158</sup> This observation is true in general but it is truer for the characters in

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<sup>156</sup> Qtd in Henry I. Schvey, “**Power Plays: David Mamet’s Theatre of Manipulation**”, in *David Mamet A CaseBook* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Garland Publishing, 1992, p.89.

<sup>157</sup> David Mamet, *Edmond*, London: Methuen London Ltd., 1986, p.2.

<sup>158</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.66

*Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo*. Their lives are directed by jungle laws which also have no standard and open to subjective interpretation and executions. Beside Durkheim's anomie theory, *alienation* theory of Karl Marx is important to highlight characters' catastrophe. Marx wrote in *The German Ideology* that "...as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest....man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him."<sup>159</sup> Marx's criticism of capitalism was not only on the economic dynamics but also on the detrimental impacts of market economy on the worker's psychological and sociological life in terms of alienation. Alienation is defined as an aftermath of private property capitalism and degraded division of labour. It is seen microcosmic and macrocosmic levels in Mamet's both plays. It can be claimed that their deviant actions, stems from the alienation from themselves, from their colleagues and from their society. By the time 'they have lost the control of their lives', they have lost the control over the conditions of employment and immediate work process, as well. At this point, since the 'alien power' has annihilated the tie between the truth and illusion, crime is normalized in the minds of the characters. Benedict Nightingale mentions about the crooks of *American Buffalo* that they "...convince themselves that crime is no "shame" and that their victims deserve to be plundered."<sup>160</sup> Since the bond between men and his surrounding is broken down, humanly interactions and values are considered as commodity that can be 'plundered'. Lois Tyson directly refers to the connection between commodity and American dream as such "...American dream is, inherently, a commodified dream, and it promotes commodification as a psychological stance....American dream and commodity are virtually interchangeable, for the American dream is the ideological apparatus of the commodity."<sup>161</sup> In both plays, besides virtual commodities as "buffalo-head nickel coin" and "deals", it is observed that all social interactions are also commodified as articles of trade and commerce, and then 'plundered' for the sake of personal profit. Greed for commodity itself which over time turns out to be commodity fetishism and tendency towards commodifying the values are stemmed from the excessive stress of dream on accumulation of property. Bigsby

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<sup>159</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970, p.53

<sup>160</sup> Benedict Nightingale, "**Glengarry Glen Ross**", in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Christopher Bigsby ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.93.

<sup>161</sup> Lois Tyson, *Psychological Politics of the American Dream*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1950, p.6.

refers to the 'marketable' aspect of the human relations as such "...an exploitation that is not necessarily of itself material but is derived from a world in which exchange value is a primary mechanism. One individual approaches another with a tainted bargain, an offer of relationship now corrupted by the values of the market...people become commodities, objects,"<sup>162</sup>

In the *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the "winner takes all" pattern of American dream is solidified with the competition at the end of which top salesman will take Cadillac and last two men will be fired. Since the only valid regulation is "winner takes all", competitors have no chance except adapting themselves to "the ends justify the means" rule. The main point is the 'survival of the fittest', yet, the question of how to survive does not matter. In the first act of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the course of the speech reveals the key points that take Levene to the climax of the crime. First, Levene demands good deals from his boss referring to his successful sales in the past. However, his boss is in absolute indifference towards his worker. His indifference triggers Levene's anomic state; his frustration has been reproduced again and again by his every instance of being refused. Disagreement between Levene and Williamson is only the seeming aspect of his anger; in fact, Levene's anomie is deeply rooted in the social and economic unrest. Milly S. Barranger briefly explains Levene's situation: "Increasingly desperate, one of the salesmen, Shelly Levene, breaks into the office and steals the premium address list of potential clients. Police are called to investigate the "crime". By contrast, the salesman's day-to-day activities as they go about deceiving their customers are regarded as good business tactics, sanctioned by the ethics of a world in which success is the ultimate achievement."<sup>163</sup> In a great correspondence with the aforementioned affirmations on the cause and effect relation between social structure and deviance in characters, Barranger reveals the very irony of the play. Moreover, Kimberly evaluates Levene's theft as a "representative of responses to a greed-driven world, which fails to provide affection for those who crave it or opportunities for principled behavior to those who aspire it."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p. 50.

<sup>163</sup> Milly S. Barranger, *Theatre a Way of Seeing*, Sixth Edition, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006, p.191.

<sup>164</sup> Kimball King, "Gradations of Criminality in the Plays of David Mamet" in *The Art of Crime*, Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004, p.149.

In *American Buffalo*, Don's resale shop is the setting where deleterious effects of social anomie can be vividly observed. Plot is astonishingly simple that Act I revolves around the plan of a robbery and Act II presents the failure of it. However, Matthew Roudane states that this 'simplicity' is ostensible; in fact, there lies an artistic imitation of American dream at the very core of the plot (57). Although Don originally plans to realize the robbery with his gopher Bob, Teach, with a series of manipulations, manages to persuade Don about disqualifying Bob. The early conversation between Don and Bob reveals that there is a real affection between them. Don, like a concerned father, warns Bob against smoking, malnutrition and coffee. Nevertheless, as soon as the common interests seem to clash, Don does not hesitate to disqualify him. The pressure of greed to possess material wealth easily intensifies his alienation towards his close friend. In the anomic atmosphere of the resale shop, traditional conduct of trade and concept of friendship lose their meaning. Nonetheless, this corruption does not spring from the deviance in their personalities. Teach clearly verbalizes that 'the country is founded on this':

**Teach:** The freedom...Of the Individual... To Embark on Any Fucking Course that sees fit...In order to secure his honest chance to make a profit.... The country's founded on this, Don..."

Teach's declaration of individual freedom in contemporary America refers to its foundation. What he perceives as "freedom" is actually abandonment. In the contemporary America, citizens are not provided with guidance in their quest for individual dream. Dream loses its utility as a means of a better life, but turns out to be a holy aim that enslaves its prayers. Breakdown of regulation and guidance comes with the breakdown of social consciousness and collectivity, what follows is men's illusionary perception of freedom which lacks offering salvation but fertile in creating deviance. An individual poisoned by this misperception thinks that he has right to 'embark on any fucking course that sees fit'. For *American Buffalo*, Don, Teach and Bob see fit to commit a robbery since they have to 'secure (their) honest chance to make profit'. Exaggerated emphasis on the making 'profit' normalizes the crime. That's why, business is recurrently used as synonymous with robbery. In their world, main objective of business is to "make profit" "by any means necessary", how to make is out of

concern. Teach mentions robbery as “tak(ing) what’s ours”(77) In the same way, crime is also normalized in the minds of the salesmen in *Glengarry Glen Ross* since the nature of their work entails lying and betraying clients in order to sell worthless lands. The key points of the speech between Aaronow and Moss reveal salesman conceptualization of crime. Aaronow, as an ‘unfavourable variation’, rejects Moss’ robbery plan on the ethical grounds that it’s a ‘crime’, however, Moss normalizes the ‘crime’ as a ‘safe’ way of getting what they want.

**Aaronow:** Because, because, you know, it’s a *crime*.

**Moss:** That’s right. It’s a crime. It is a crime. It’s also very safe.<sup>165</sup>

Since Moss is highly alienated from the process of employment, he does not hesitate to commit in robbery; on the other hand, his alienation from immediate colleagues gives way to his manipulation of innocent. However, deviance of Moss can only be judged in terms of the anomic conditions that feeds the evil in him. Several critics propose the deleterious impacts of socio-cultural and economic codes on individuals. Kimball King examines the reasons of the ‘despair’ of Mamet’s characters: “...ultimately we must ask if Mamet’s characters have been overtaken by their own atavistic impulses, even as they are driven by the relentless injustice of capitalism and the spectre of universal greed, or if extreme individualism – perhaps as a by-product of capitalistic self-interest- has doomed them to solipsistic despair.”<sup>166</sup> Atavistic impulses in terms of pertaining to characteristics of ancestors have also great relevance with that of modern individuals. Moreover, Dean declares her sympathy due to the tragedy of victimization behind their corruption: “...despite their corruption, they are worthy of our sympathy; a ruthless, capitalistic society has set them on the Wheel, and for them there is no turning back.” Steven Price mentions the community of this issue: “...established national, criminal law that is a priori and known to all”.<sup>167</sup> Bigsby refers Mametian approach to this issue as such: “...Mamet does concern himself with specifically American values, though the sense of loss and alienation from which his characters suffer is hardly only a product of

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<sup>165</sup> David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, London: Methuen Drama, 2001, p. 18

<sup>166</sup> Kimball King, “**Gradations of Criminality in the Plays of David Mamet**” in *The Art of Crime*, Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004 p.140

<sup>167</sup> Steven Price, “**Harold Pinter’s ‘Before the Law’**” in *The Art of Crime*, Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004, p.59.

capitalism or debased national myths.”<sup>168</sup> Mamet himself states that American myth is the main incentive behind the character’s catastrophe: “...th at American myth: the idea of something out of nothing. And this also affects the spirit of the individual. It’s very divisive. One feels one can only succeed at the cost of someone else.”<sup>169</sup> Analogues to the observations of prominent sociologists, Mamet put s forward that is the ‘American myth’ what deteriorates ‘the spirit of the individual’. Afore cited comments reveals that Mamet’s characters are the victims of their society. That’s why Bigsby puts forward that they don’t live but perform: “...deracinated c haracters, with those who perform rather than live their lives...”<sup>170</sup> Mamet’s characters are not completely blind to the catastrophe of their world. Towards the end of *American Buffalo*, Teach shows forth the very anomic condition:

**Teach:** The Whole Entire World.  
 There is No Law.  
 There is No Right and Wrong.  
 The World is Lies.  
 There is No Friendship.  
 Every Fucking Thing. ( Pause.)  
 Every God-forsaken Thing....  
**Don:** Calm down, Walt  
**Teach:** We all live like the cavemen

As Teach publicizes in a lawless world, the co llapse of norms to identify the right and the wrong is inevitable. In his sudden manifestation of the world as a wasteland, Teach confesses that they are living like cavemen thoroughly directed by instincts.

The American Dream was initially appreciated b y people all around the world as a means of fulfilling their expectations and hopes. Since the dream holds connotations of ‘unlimited aspirations’, it would be ambiguous to list the impulses behind this quest. However, it can be said that some people desired to enjoy religious freedom; some people imagined the new land as a chance to escape from prejudices; some people noticed the untouched opulence. As the existence of America has dramatically changed in the course of the history, the dream, its associatio ns and its feasibility has altered

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<sup>168</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.69

<sup>169</sup> Matthew C. Roudane, “**Something Out of Nothing**”, in *David Mamet in Conversation* Leslie Kane ed., United States of America: The University of Michiga n Press, 2001, p.47

<sup>170</sup> Christopher Bigsby ed., *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.7.

likewise. In the contemporary America, the holy national dream of salvation transformed into individual salvation through material wealth. Its scope is minimized yet fanaticism is maximized. The individual who are free to pursue their own dream, are also free to employ, no matter what it requires. Such a freedom in this context, independent from ethical sanctions, inescapably leads to a chaotic and suffocating atmosphere of anomie. In the anomic aura of the country, as a result of fevered alienation from themselves and their society, people remove every strain standing before their dream. Without considering its moral or ethical validity, every deviance is normalized, justified and even blessed for the sake of achieving ultimate monetary goals. Bigsby states that the absence or collapse of communality and genuinely shared values in Mamet's plays serve for the realization of virtue of communality:

“The characters in *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* meet in the semblance of a community, acknowledging a need, yet they never connect, being driven by other imperatives, imperatives which are the product of a society whose myths and social virtues have to do with the self. Their principle is that of Arthur Miller's Uncle Ben in *Death of a Salesman*: never fight fair with a stranger. And the world is full of strangers.”<sup>171</sup>

*American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* present us the imperatives and their immediate impacts on individuals and on society in accordance with the alienation and anomie theories. Deviance as a crime is the most recurrent expression of perceiving others as “stranger”. In the real estate office, the salesmen do not ‘fight fair’ since they are totally estranged to each other; they are not ‘fair’ to their clients since they are also estranged from the society they live in. In the same way, in *American Buffalo*, Don and Bob who are good friends at first, turn out to be ‘strangers’ for each other due to the conflict of interests. In both plays, anomie and alienation reverberate through characters’ conduct with the process of their employment, interaction with colleagues, position in the society and the perception of their own existences. Anomie as an aftermath of ruthless American business and American dream both of which is glorified with the Americans, has also its own aftermaths. It bears a powerful and threatening

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<sup>171</sup> Christopher Bigsby ed., *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.13

capacity to turn a society into 'wreck'. King confronts us with the very reality of our age by giving wasteland-like aspects of the Mametian world:

“...Mamet permits us to observe the fragmentation of modern communities, especially the urban worlds, and sexism and racism that threatens a fragile social fabric. When the laws of society are literally transgressed, by murder, burglary, rape, or unwarranted physical assaults, he forces his audience to confront the ultimate moral and ethical issues that can sustain or wreck a civilization.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Kimball King, “**Gradations of Criminality in the Plays of David Mamet**” in *The Art of Crime*, Leslie Kane ed., New York: Routledge, 2004 p.137.



#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

*Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo*, mentioned as two of David Mamet's 'business trilogy', not only deal with the pressures and handicaps of the American business system on the individual level, but also explore the very ramifications on the universal level. At the outset of its foundation, with the help of Puritan work ethic, America - 'the land of opportunity' - offers its inhabitants equal chance to achieve their own dreams of 'pursuit of happiness' through hard work, courage and determination. However in the course of time, it has seen that American Dream cannot be reached only through hard work. Optimistic rhetoric of the dream disregards the social stratification which brings about insurmountable hindrances and hierarchical barriers before common citizens. Moreover, with the ardent march of capitalism, the dream lost its all-encompassing communal aspects and reduced to a greedy accumulation of personal wealth. The dream's resonance on characters is tragic since the characters are compelled to indulge in the 'deviance' in order to realize it. In his plays the deviance, executed by the characters as the only valid mean of reaching their American Dream, includes not only felonies but also misdemeanours. The characters' predilection towards deviance is worth to be examined in the context of the socio-cultural-economic evolution of the United States of America and the current state of its business system as well as the American dream.

Although the dream's rhetoric suggests that everyone should have equal chance of 'pursuits of happiness', Mamet's plays explicitly present both the absence of that so-called 'equal chance' and 'means'. His characters are in one hand triggered with the greed of material possession, on the other hand devoid of any ethical guidance in their search. Therefore, conflicts between the dream's theoretical manifestation and its applicability in practice cause a suffocating anomic setting. Emile Durkheim considers **anomie** as the reason of the increase in suicides and considers socio-economic and cultural disorder as the reason of the anomy. Emile Durkheim refers to the conflict that exhausts the individual as such "no living being can be happy or even exist unless his

needs are sufficiently proportioned to his means”.<sup>173</sup> Anomie is not only a psychological condition of alienation, anxiety or frustration; it is also a social condition characterized by instability and deinstitutionalization in a wider sense. That is the normless American business system, in which characters are driven by the impetus of their dream, forms the whole paradox and generates the deviance/crime. Robert Merton’s ‘Strain Theory’ defends that deviant behaviours -as pursuing illegal means to reach the culturally prescribed goals- emerge when the individuals are prevented from accessing institutionalized means. Institutionally confirmed goals –American Dream in this case- require conformed means, otherwise the discrepancy between social goals and legitimate means give rise to ‘deinstitutionalization’ which further causes anomie. To illustrate, as a Durkheimian ‘unhappy’ character in the anomic setting of *American Buffalo*, Teach openly vocalizes afore mentioned theories: “There is No Law. There is No Right and Wrong....We all live like cavemen.”<sup>174</sup> In both plays, unethical methods such as ‘by any means necessary’ and ‘the ends justify the means’ turns out to be acceptable, even laudable for the characters who are thrown into an unfair normless competition. The suffocating pressure of reaching the dream of personal -wealth in the context of American business system normalizes the deviance which occurs as manipulating and misleading the customers and colleagues lying, cheating, betraying, fighting, bribing and stealing. What’s more, the unethical conducts of the businessmen grow out in a hierarchical line from top to bottom. Since only the ‘fittest’ has chance to survive and being ‘fittest’ requires deviance in this unfair competition, Mamet’s characters are fittingly called as ‘capitalist victims of capitalism’.<sup>175</sup>

At the very outset of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, through the sales contest which dominates the whole atmosphere of the real estate office, we witness under which circumstances ‘capitalist victims of capitalism’ are created. As befitting to the ‘winner takes all’ motto of the American business system, the winner in the office will receive a Cadillac, second prize will be a set of steak knives, the third and the fourth salesmen will be fired. The offstage real estate owners, Mitch and Murray institute this contest in

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<sup>173</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, Trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951, p.246.

<sup>174</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.103.

<sup>175</sup> David Kennedy Sauer, “**The Marxist Child’s Play of Mamet’s Tough Guys and Churchill’s Top Girls**” in *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance* Leslie Kane ed., New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, p. 131.

order to increase their sales and reduce the expenses of the two workers. Since the profit of the organization is the sole concern in the system, the side-effects of their implementations are not considered. The pressure of being the top man on the board and the anxiety of being fired turn those colleagues into enemies. As early as the first scene, we are informed about the characters' inclination to deviance through the bargain between Shelly Levene and his boss John Williamson. Bargain speech also reveals the paradoxical stalemate since the only way to sell is to have the best leads, yet the best leads are given to those who sell most. In this contradictory setting, Levene has no chance but to yield to frustration and soon anomie. It is his anomie that provokes him to burglarize his office. The play shows how the proper way of conduct between boss and worker and that of among colleagues collapse. Ironically, for Levene and Williamson's case, the agreement on bribery fails only because Levene has no cash on him, so it can be claimed that even the deviance requires economic power. Williamson's position as an office manager must be taken into consideration since it refers to the hierarchical aspect of corruption in the business system. First of all Mitch and Murray, standing at the peak of this hierarchy, symbolizes the genesis of all the unethical processes by selling worthless lands as profitable investment. Secondly the boss Williamson who lacks any ethical judgment accepts bribe and deceives other salesmen and at last, the one who is at the bottom of this pyramid -Levene- robs the office. Exploitation of the salesmen by the institution then normalizes the salesmen's exploitation of his process of work as well as his colleagues in a highly anomic context. Each of these three instances of deviance serves for its own interest. Moreover, in the course of the play, it is seen that interests clash at certain points. Characters are so preoccupied by their self-interests that even crimes such as stealing leads from office and manipulating clients are rationalized. Crime is celebrated as a means of pursuing one's self-interest. Christopher Bigsby's definition of America as "a society with its eyes on prize"<sup>176</sup> is explicitly demonstrated by Mamet in *Glengarry Glen Ross* since not only the salesmen but also the boss and company itself are in the pursuit of 'prize' at any cost. In *American Buffalo* characters are ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of 'prize', too.

One of the strikest dramatic ironies of *Glengarry Glen Ross* occurs when Williamson turns Levene into the police for robbing the office, yet we witness that

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<sup>176</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby ed., *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.20.

Williamson comes so close to crime during his rapacious bargain with Levene. The collapse of the professional conduct between David Moss and George Aarano is another instance of the unethical and the normless. The dialogue between these two fellow salesmen starts as an innocent exchange on the process of their work but becomes an entrapment which is strategically employed by Moss in order to persuade Aaronow to carry out the robbery and sell the stolen leads to another real estate office. The play reveals how comradeship and mutual dependence and fidelity to the institution lose their significance among salesmen and turn out to be a mere commodity that can be exploited in accordance with the imperatives of one's private concerns. In Moss' eyes, his colleague Aaronow is nothing but a means to reach his aim. Richard Roma's conduct with his potential customer James Lingk is one of the examples of degenerated interactions and corrupted values. Through their interaction we witness the bankruptcy of mutual dependence and disintegration of social fabric, which is an urgent aspect of being human, in the face of profit concerns. Another innocent dialogue again turns out to be an ambush at the end of which gullible James Lingk is seized by skillful hunter Roma. In the course of that innocent speech Lingk is betrayed by the promise of profitable lands in Florida. Second Act which presents a police detective investigating the crime in the ransacked real estate office is highly ironic. The detective tries to find out who has done the robbery, yet the dramatic irony is that everyone even the company itself is guilty; in general, the system has a share in this crime. It would not be appropriate to condemn the thief for his personal deviance since the play distinctly puts forward the broader extensions and stimulants of this crime by targeting American business system and its modified -in accordance with the self-interest- ethics. Ethic is modified according to the requirements of 'obsessive search for success and individuality'. Bigsby notes the similarities between *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *American Buffalo* in terms of deterioration: "...*American Buffalo* captures a similar world. It is a savage satire on the collapse of American values, on the process whereby American liberal principles have been accommodated to a rapacious self-interest. It enacts the disintegration of community and the failure equally of language and morality."<sup>177</sup> The disintegration of a real estate office and a junk shop stands for a wider decomposition in the material and spiritual fabric of the society.

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<sup>177</sup> C.W.E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-century American Drama*, New York:

The collapse of spiritual values and the domination of 'liberal principles', which are liberal enough to be modified as befitting to self-interest, can be considered as both the reasons and the results of anomie. Since the other concerns except the monetary ones fail to address the ethical ways of existence, characters are lost in the abyss of deviance. The writer himself highlights this frustration as such: "...our society has been fallen apart and nobody knows what he or she should be doing."<sup>178</sup> Durkheimian concept of anomie in which suicide is normalized in the state of normlessness and Merton's thesis which defends that detachment between 'culturally approved goals' and the means to reach them breeds deviance, are absolutely realized in both plays. Anomie and its further extensions as deviance are inevitable in a society which 'has been fallen apart'. Mamet's characters in both plays do not know what they 'should be doing' and also the social structure in general is unable to advise them what they should do. Even the ones who seem most decisive lose their direction and become motionless. In *American Buffalo*, Don is highly decisive about stealing the buffalo-head nickel coin yet he even does not know how and with whom he would do. Don's junk shop in *American Buffalo* is a vivid microcosm of the ethics-lacking business world. Multiple forces such as imperatives and pressures of American capitalism and its financial-based dream exercise on the characters and determine their distorted attitudes. Teach does his best in order to take part in the robbery plan since the plan for Teach is the only way of salvation and filling the void in his life. Since in the given panorama of the society, he is left alone without guidance of any norm and regulation, he strongly clings to the robbery plan. Bigsby presents a direct link between the arbitrariness of the character's actions and 'arbitrary nature of laws' as such: "...the very relativity of values, the fanciful and arbitrary nature of laws, invented and reinvented for the moment, puts a pressure on character beyond that which turned the protagonist of the naturalistic novel into mere evidence of environmental or hereditary determinism".<sup>179</sup> Only valid criterion for Mamet's characters is the immediate necessities of the 'business'. Teach, in *American Buffalo*, says "The Past is Past, and this is Now, and so Fuck you".<sup>180</sup> As stated before, characters modify the ethics in accordance with their individual

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Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.261.

<sup>178</sup> David Mamet, *Some Freaks*, New York: Viking, 1989, p.23.

<sup>179</sup> C.W.E.Bigsby, *David Mamet*, London: Methuen & Co., 1985, p.83.

<sup>180</sup> David Mamet, *American Buffalo*, New York: Grove Press, 1977, p.16.

expectations, and then immorality occurs as a result of the weak, insufficient or totally absent values which are also 'relative'.

Besides aforementioned theories of anomie, *Institutional Anomie Theory* (IAT) also highlights the impact of socio-cultural structure on high crime rates. Social structure, which superfluously stress on the embellished American Dream of material well-being, turns citizens into criminals. Merton's thesis of anomie presents an imbalance between the 'culturally approved goals' and the 'institutionally approved means of achieving these goals'. The characters in both plays are snared in a society that puts an exaggerated emphasis on monetary gain but offers no means to realize it. Under these paradoxical circumstances, there emerged 'buffaloed' characters who constantly modify the norms/ethics and rationalize the immorality at the end. As a result of this setting, crime is so normalized that for example in *American Buffalo* robbery is repeatedly mentioned as 'business'. *American Buffalo* presents the tragic collapse of friendship in the face of this distorted aim of 'business'. *Glengarry Glen Ross* bears similar tragedy in terms of revealing the collapse of the spiritual values in the name of business. Therefore, any method of running that 'business' is laudable and applicable for them. In both plays multiple pressures of the American business exert on the characters and further create the core of the imperatives that govern them. Matthew Roudane evaluates the relation between 'the American ethic of business' and its effects that affects the individual as such:

"This relationship, in *American Buffalo* as in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), prompts debates about the individual's sense of public responsibility and his or her definitions of private liberties. Throughout his theatre, Mamet creates a dialectic which, on the one hand, recognizes the individual's right to pursue entrepreneurial interests, while, on the other hand, concedes that in an ideal world such private interests should, but do not, exist in equipoise with a sense of civic and moral duty."<sup>181</sup>

In both plays, the collapse of 'equipoise' between personal-interests and public responsibility is inevitable since social, institutional and private interests are constantly clashing with each other. The choices of characters in the problematic situations are mainly determined by the intensive individualistic instincts, that's why at the end of the

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<sup>181</sup> Matthew Roudane, "**Betrayal and Friendship: David Mamet's *American Buffalo***" in *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet* Christopher Bigsby ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.58.

play, Teach shouts as ‘we all live like cavemen’. Consequently, evolution/mutation process of America, in which early pursuers of ‘happiness’ are transformed into ‘cavemen’ relentlessly marching for their individual needs, together with the very driving forces behind that process are vividly demonstrated by Mamet through his ‘gang tragedies.’”

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