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The Postmodern Features in David Mamet's *American Buffalo*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Bed Prasad Joshi has completed his thesis entitled “Postmodern Features in David Mamet’s *American Buffalo*” under my supervision. He carried out this research from July 2014 to April 2016. I, hereby, recommend this thesis to be submitted for the viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “The Postmodern Features in David Mamet’s *American Buffalo*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Bed Prasad Joshi, has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research looks into David Mamet's *American Buffalo* from the postmodernist perspective that digs out the postmodern features inherent in the play. *American Buffalo* foregrounds the notions of self-reflexive referentiality by challenging the notion of language, character and history. It basically focuses on betrayal, treachery, crisis, alienation, absurdism and other postmodern features prevailed in the play. Similarly it also focuses on fragmentation inherent in every character. But they do not lament over the loss. The activities which the characters are performing have at all no meaning in their life. It is the activities of their life. Here the attempt has been made to define the indefinable concept postmodern with reference to prominent theories. The protagonist makes the scheme of burglary but he was deceived by his own colleagues. The act of betrayal became the violation of works ethics. Mamet juxtaposes two characters, Bob and Teach as the counterparts of Don. They are of different nature. Teach is the devotional and aggressive character whereas Bob is betrayal and cheater..

As a result the scheme turns in vain and Bob

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I. Postmodern Features in *American Buffalo*

This research work makes an attempt to explore the postmodern features in David Mamet's *American Buffalo*. It questions the western society and their real life activities. It basically provides the play as crisis, instability, lack of coherence, fragmentation, multiplicity and self-referentialness. *American Buffalo* foreground the notions of self-reflexive referentiality by challenging the notions of language, character and history. It is the play which had been premiere in the showcase production at the Goodman theatre. This play won the Drama Critics Circle Award for best American play and prompted Clive Barnes, of the New York Times, to proclaim of Mamet "the man can write ". Since the Mamet has become a favorite with critics and audiences.

American Buffalo is the postmodern play where there are four characters as Bob, Don, Teach and Fletzer. The characters of this play are performing the absurdist activities. Deception, treachery, frustration and betrayal are the thing prevailed in the psyche of the characters. Don the protagonist of the play had the junk shop sold the nickel to the customer. But later he thinks that it may cost considerably more. So throughout the play he planned to get back that nickel but his plan get unsuccessful when one of his friend play a game of deception. The characters of the play in this play have the frustrated mentality. They never found peace in their mind. Whatever they perform the act, later they found no worth of it. As a result in the play they want to get back the sold nickel. Don, the protagonist want back the sold nickel in order to gain more money. His all values are guided by the market economy. Regarding the play Don forget all the human values running through the money. His frustrated mentality guides him to immorality.

Similarly Bob is the character in the play which suggests instability. He has no any fixed identity. He is not trustworthy character because of his difference in talk and action. He deceives the protagonist of the play Don by bringing a similar nickel. As a result he is hurt by Teach by the metal. He is taken to the hospital in the Don's car. He plays a game of betrayal among his friends. Regarding the play vulgar language is used which is the output of postmodernism. It plays the vital role to create the feature of the postmodern drama. David Mamet is the author of *Oleanna*, *Speed the plow*, *Glengarry Glenn Ross* which won him the Pulitzer prize for Drama. He has been nominated for three Oscars for his screen play *The Verdict*, *The Untouchables* and *Wag the dog*. His works often dealing with the success and failure of American dream noted for sharp and profane dialogue. By the beginning of the 21st century Mamet was widely regarded as one of the finest American writer for screen. Mamet also ventured into the satire with the play *November* and he explored the nature of guilt and shame as related to racial, sexual and issues in *Race*.

In Mamet's play *American Buffalo* the characters are seen performing the absurdist activities. Deception, betrayal and treachery is prevailed upon the mind of the every character. These characters have their frustrated mentality. As a result they want their nickel back by performing the act of burglary. The protagonist, Don's act of burglary or desire to get his nickel back through robbery, clearly motivated by a sense of injured honor. Similarly the planned robbery itself then represents yet another attempt at escaping the money economy. The characters as Teach, Bob and Fletzer are also cunning and fool who accomplish in the work Don. But later they themselves have the fragment among themselves. Bob is seen playing the role conspiracy upon Don's scheme. In a way the character are seen performing the absurdist activities to them. In the first act of the play, after the final preparation to

begin the burglary they waited for Fletzer. At last Bob with a similar nickel to Don sold to the customer came in the place. So they had a conflict among these friends.

Basically in the postmodernism each and every characters suspect upon them. They have no belief upon others. Regarding the drama Bob play a trick of betrayal upon his friends. Teach suspects upon Bob and Fletzer, ask about Fletzer where he is. When Bob fails to reveal the truth, he hits Bob with the metal and wounds him. Finally he is taken to the hospital for treatment in Don's car. But at last it is revealed that Bob plays a trick to make up to Don for his failure to keep tabs upon the customer.

This play takes place in the Don's resale shop, a secondhand junk store run by Don Dubrow. The protagonist Don is instructing Bob his young friend in the "art of business". The play has two act. The first act of the play is set in the Don's resale shop where Don and Bob are talking each other. Don is instructing about the good business. Bob is accepting all the advices of Don. Similarly they also discusses about the last night's poker game held into the shop. Similarly they also discusses about their friend Fletzer. The protagonist of the play Don offers other the fatherly advice such as "never skip breakfast" and it wouldn't kill you a vitamin. Their relationship is like that of father and son is established.

After a while another character of the play Teach enters to the shop and talks about their friend Ruthie who offers him dinner at morning. Like Don, Teach offers him his own personal wisdom on the topic of business and the need to keep it separate from friendship. Similarly the business discussed in the play is always "gambling" and "robbery". Again Bob returns back and he speaks about the "guy" he has been watching and informs him that he saw him put suitcase in his car. Although Bob has forgotten to bring back Don's coffee, Don is delighted with Bob's information and sends him back to the dinner to fetch the missing beverages.

As their main topic of their talk is the business, Don describes about nickel he had sold to the customer in ninety dollar. It is made up of buffalo head nickel. Though he had sold it for ninety dollar, he thinks that it may worth considerably more. So he plans to rob the sold nickel along with the coins the customer had with him. He had enlisted Bob as his assistant and Bob has been watching “the guy’s” house which is around the corner from the shop. Later that night bob will steal he guy’s coin collection.

However Teach decides that he should “go in” instead of Bob, who he call as a “great kid” and also an amateur who will not complete a job as potentially complicated as this. They made a plan to broke into the house and get back that money. Bob. Asks Don for money to support a drug habit. Similarly in this play drug habit is also seen. The characters are spoiled by the evil practices. After getting money Bob exists leaving Don and Teach to plan to robbery.

Similarly Don is seen nervous and frustrated seeing his friend lack of preparation and decides to call Fletcher to have him work with them. But Teach refuses Don’s decision for calling for Fletcher. Later, Teach reluctantly agrees to Don and leaves the shop to take a nap. He will return at 11.00 in order to carry out their criminal plans.

In the Act II, it was the time of 11:15. Don was alone thinking what to do. Teach had not arrived. He is unable to reach Fletcher whose phone line only offers him a busy signal each time it is. Later Bob arrives and asks money and then offers a buffalo head nickel that he had “got down town”. The actions of Bob are clearly suspicious but Don still feels guilty about shutting him out of the robbery. Then he later plans to buy it on the condition that looks up its value in the coin collectors guide. Bob will not give up the coin however Teach presents at that time seeing the

entrance of Bob. Similarly Don is so much worried while he saw the laziness prevailed in Bob. Now Teach convinces Don to give Bob enough money. Don was still in hope that he will arrive at the spot. Teach attempt to make a call for Bob but unfortunately he was dialing the wrong number because the hour of waiting have the limit. But Don is seen too loyal to his friends, wants to wait for his friends to come. The character, Teach want to be secure by taking the gun with him. He found this work difficult and risky but Don feels taking the gun in the planning so risky.

The tension between them arises when Bob returns back to shop. He came with story that Fletcher whom Teach and Don were waiting was mugged and is in the hospital with a broken jaw. Teach doesn't believe him and insists that he is in league with Ruthie or Fletcher himself. Frustrated teach was suspicious in the action of Bob and make a conclusion the behind their backs he may have already performed he job. Now wanting to know which hospital Fletcher was admitted Don asks about the details of the hospital. When Bob give the details of "Masonic" Don make a call to the hospital to check his story. Bob is so nervous and frightened at the moment when he is asked about the buffalo head nickel. As a result he offers a vague explanation. Teach finally gives a chance to be honest and demand "what is set,.....?" When Bob proclaims his ignorance, Teach grabs a nearby object and hits him with it on the side of the head. Don looks away and tells Bob, "You brought by yourself".

At the final stage Ruthie calls to the shop and tells Don that Fletcher was, infact mugged and that he has been admitted to Colombus Hospital-not Masonic. Finally Teach brings the car of Don and Bob was taken to hospital for treatment.

Mamet is a theatrician of the ethical character, sets and overall situations, however map out a predatory world in which genuine communication and authentic love remain distant forces. Hence, Barker 's lines in the Water Engine ratify, Mamet

suggests, the gulf between idea and reality: And now we leave the hall of science, the hub of our century of Progress Exposition. Science is the greatest force for good and evil we possess. Our thoughts, our dreams our aspirations rendered into practical and useful forms. Our science is our self. Such practicality for Mamet prefigures a kind of spiritual death on both a cultural and an individual level that can be seen on the then Chicago.

David Mamet winner of Pulitzer Prize in 1984 (for his plays *Glengarry Glenn Ross*), two Obie Awards (1976,1983) and two New York Drama critics Circle Awards (1977,1986) among many others, is regarded as a major voice in American drama and Cinema. He animates the stage through language, a poetic idiolect that explores the relationship between public issue and private desires, the effect of this relationship on the individual spirit. He is known for his wit and comedy, but beyond the streetwise dialogues lie more problematic concerns. The typical Mamet play presents the near-complete separation of the individual from genuine relationships. Although he varies his play in terms of plots and themes, Mamet seems critiquing what he believes is a business ethic that has led to the corruption of both the social contract and his hero's moral values. Mamet's major achievements then concern his use of language, his social examination of professional and private betrayals and alienation, and his ability to capture the anxieties of the individual-whether he or she is a small -time thief a working class person, or a Hollywood executive.

Born on the South side of Chicago on November 30, 1947, David Alan Mamet became interested in the theater as the teenager. He worked at the Hull House Theater and at Second city, one of Chicago's richest improvisational performance sites at the time, experiences that he recognized as having exerted an important influence on his language, characterizations and plot structures. His mother Lenore Silver, was a

school teacher, his father Bernard Mamet a labor lawyer and minor semantist, and though the parents' intellectual awareness of language plainly influenced their son, their divorce seems to have affected the young Mamet even more greatly. Exiled to what Mamet saw as a sterile suburb of Chicago – Olympic Fields he geographical move seemed all the more complicated because of his familial dislocations. His stepfather apparently (Mamet revealed in a 1992 essay entitled “The Rake”) physically and psychologically abused the Mamet family and it seems as if the world of the theater differed the playwright some form of reprieve and, later recognition from a tension filled youth. As a boy, Mamet also acted on television, an opportunity made possibly by his uncle, who was the broadcasting for the Chicago Board of Rabbis. Mamet often was cast as a Jewish boy plagued by religious self-doubt and concerns.

Mamet has written more than thirty plays a number of sketches, poetry, essays, children's play ,several important Chekhov adaptations, a book concerning film directing, and more than dozen screen plays. He has also garnered many awards, including a Pulitzer prize for Glengary Glenn Ross in 1986. Mamet in the 1990's has been honored for his brilliant use of language and characterizations that capture important aspects of American cultural poetics. His play Oleanna, which opened at the Orpheum Theatre in New York city in October,1992 and featured William H. Macy and Mamet's wife, British born Rebecca Pidgeon has only added to the dramatist's reputation for staging serious plays about serious matters.

The issue of the present research is to dig out the issue of postmodernism which has yet been abandoned. In addition the aforementioned issue is basically based on the on the idea of Fredrick Nietzsche, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Francois Lyotard andAlbert Camus are mention. The present research has the

synopsis of the entire work. It begins with the brief outline of the drama and an introductory outline of the present research study itself. The paper tries to explain the theoretical modality that is to be applied in this research work. It provides the short introduction of the term postmodernism. Postmodernists' critics will be used for tool.

Many literary movements have occurred in the history of English literature. Each and every moment tries to explain the philosophical inquires through multifarious literature produced in different eras. Philosophical inquires mean the debate between mind and matter, subject and object. This debate has been shifting with the run of time and social strata of people. Literature of different types can be found in different epochs. It is because Marxists says that the social surrounding shapes the thought of people. For them, our consciousness is like liquid. So, it can be shaped according to the environment where in what circumstance we are born. However, there might other factors to determine multiplicity of perspectives in our life.

Before postmodernism, modernism came with inevitability of a progress in all areas of human endeavor and in the power of reason as well as a commitment to originality in both thought and artistic expression. As a cultural ethos, modernism is uncompromisingly forward and at least implicitly makes the assumption that present civilization is to be considered superior to that of that of the past in the extent of its knowledge and the sophistication of its techniques. As an aesthetic, modernism promotes the view that originality is the highest state of artistic endeavor and this can be achieved by experimentation. Modernism emphasizes on impressionism and subjectivity in writing; how is perceived is more important than what is perceived. Modernism is understood in term of deviation from the established conventions in literary works. It refers to experimental writings. For doing so, modernist writers

violate the traditional norms and emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives and random –seeming collage of different materials. Most of modernists' work are guided by self- reflexivity of self-consciousness. It rejects the distinction between “high” and” low” cultures, both in choice of materials and used to produce art in methods of displaying, distributing and consuming act. Modern writers present fragmentation as something tragic something to be lamented and mourned as a loss. Many modernist works try to uphold the idea that work of art can provide unity, coherence and meaning, which has been lost in the modern life.

Postmodernism is wide ranging cultural movement which adopts a skeptical attitude to many of the principles and assumptions that have underpinned western thoughts and social life in the last centuries. It is a broad term that has emerged as an area of academic structure since the 1960's. It appears in wide variety of disciplines or area of study, including art, architecture fashion and technology. Likewise, Hutchinson Encyclopedia view postmodernism as:

Late 20th century movement came inart against the preoccupation modernism with form and a technique rather than context. In the visual arts, and particularly in architecture is uses an amalgam of styles from the past, whose slightly off-key familiarity has a more immediate appeal than the austerities of modernism. (Upshall 1951)

Remarkably enough, postmodernism like modernism follows most of the common ideas rejecting boundaries between high and low form of art, defying rigid genre dislocation, emphasizing pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony and playfulness.

Postmodernism art favors self-consciousness, discontinuity, simultaneity, fragmentation, and emphasis on the decenter and dehumanized subject. However, postmodern writers differ from modern writers in the sense that they do no lament the

idea of fragmentation, incoherence, but rather celebrate that. The world is meaningless so the postmodernist thinker do not believe that art can make meaning. They enjoy playing with non-sense.

Postmodernism manifests itself in many fields of cultural endeavors, architecture, literature, photography, film, painting, videos, dance, music and elsewhere. In general terms it takes the form of self –determining statement and distinctive narration. M.H. Abrahams enunciates postmodernism as:

The term postmodernism is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939-45) when the effects on western morale of the first war greatly exacerbated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, and the ominous fact of overpopulation. Postmodernism involves not only continuation, something carried to an extreme of the counter-traditional experiments of modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from modernists forms which had inevitably become in their own conventions. An understanding in some postmodernist writings prominently in Samuel Beckett and other authors of the literature of the absurd is to subvert the foundation of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaningless of existence and the underlying “abyss” of “void” “nothingness” on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended. (168-69)

Therefore postmodernism involves a kind of absurdity and meaninglessness in the literary text that tries to subvert the foundation of posit able truth and the already

established modes of thought. To write about postmodern is to get involved in a variety of problematic issue relations to boundaries and definitions.

David Lodge quotes a passage from Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* which cancels itself out as it goes on (229): permutation. Postmodernist writers typically incorporate alternative narrative lines in the same text (230); discontinuity. Beckett according to Lodge "disrupts the continuity of his discourse by unpredictable swerves of tone, metafictional asides to his readers, blank spaces in the text, contradiction and permutation" (231); randomness' or a discontinuity produced by composing 'according to a logic of the absurd finally excess destruction' (Hawthorn 22).

The critical search for the truth is constrained to be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism, and its outcome will necessarily be knowledge that is relative and fallible rather than absolute and certain. Richard Tarnas explains postmodernism as:

Hence, the quest for knowledge must endlessly self-revise. One must try the new, experiment and explore, test again subjective and objective consequences, learn from one's mistakes, take nothing for granted, treat all the provisional, assume no absolutes. Reality is not a solid, self-contained given but fluid, unfolding process, an "open universe" (396), continuity affected and molded by one's action and beliefs.

Postmodernism, according to Hutcheon stresses both the subjective ways of acquiring knowledge. It entails a tension between parody and history and fiction. Hutcheon associates postmodernism with politics by saying, "they are bedfellows" (2). She further asserts:

The word 'postmodernism' has been bandied about in artistic circles since 1960s, of course, most often used too generally and vaguely to be very useful encompassing things as diverse as Susan Sontag's *Camp*, Leslie Fielder's *pop* and Ihab Hassan's *literature of silence*. Gerald

Graff has distinguished two strains in the 1960s version of 'postmodernism' –one of apocalyptic despair and other visionary celebration.(10)

The word 'postmodernism' as Webster's New World Collage Dictionary defines comes after and usually in relation to modernism in 20th century, especially in the art and literature, and writing since the 1950s, characterized by eclecticism in style and content freedom from sheer theoretical constrain indifference to social concern and so on. It describes further designation of various theories used widely in criticism and interpretation, which questions or rejects claims of absolute certainty, objective truth and as in language or works of art intrinsic meaning regarding such claims of assertions of privilege, political power and so on.

According the prominent philosopher Jean Francois postmodernism is characterized by the collapse of grand narratives. Narratives of emancipation and progress no longer hold in the wake of postmodern thinking. Postmodern reveals how knowledge has been legitimized by the meta-narratives of science. He examines development in the nature and circulation of knowledge since the end of World War. He insists that this has led to the interrogation of the enlightenment narrative of emancipation and progress. He sees a distinction between scientific knowledge and non-scientific narrative. Furthermore he holds that because science has no meta-legitimation, i.e. a non-scientific narrative. Since both narrative and scientific knowledge have a common foundation of legitimation in narrative, they are equally valid. Jean Francois Lyotard, in his well-known work "The Postmodernism Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Discusses that Postmodernism as:

Surveys the status of science and technology and has become something of a bible of postmodernism. For the past few decades

science has increasingly invested languages, linguistic theories, communication cybernetics informatics computers and computer language, information storage, data banks and to another. He proclaimed that these technological changes would have knowledge. (56)

ArkadyPlotnisky comments, "The idea of postmodernism designates different way of living, perceiving and understanding the world, or different way of doing so"(263).

He further states:

Between the juxtaposition of the 'modern' and 'postmodern' identified by Lyotard there is an accompanying difference of attitude toward his 'loss' of contain ability of knowledge and culture recognized in particular in the modern (ist) 'nostalgia' is also seen in the desire for the unique name, evidenced in terms such as being or modern, as opposed to the postmodern (ist) affirmation or even celebration of loss, often correctly linked Nietzsche.(264)

So postmodernism is characterized by not merely single phenomenon; rather it is marked with various factors- heterogeneity, self-reflexiveness multiplicity in terms of perspective and the celebration of fragmentation. Postmodernists, unlike modernist thinkers, do not accept what already established convention imposes certain concepts into their mind. In Derridean term they are skeptic toward 'center'. Instead of revolving around a single point, they enjoy roaming everywhere. Postmodernists' try to present what is unpreventable and unsayable. Not only they express the voice of the margin or the subaltern group but also play with change and contingency. Defining postmodernism, Jim Powell thus puts his view:

Thus, where Yeats, Eliot and Joyce sought to restore a deep new center, a new sense of design, form and depth, a new sense of primordial origin in myths, postmodernists often see no reason for center. Instead, they favor decentering –a play of chance, antiform and surface. According to Hassan, whereas the imaginations of modernists such as Joyce, Picasso and Eliot were constelling around new center, new coherent structures, postmodernists' often create, compose, of paint entirely by chance –spilling or throwing paint or canvasses, randomly determining the pitch and duration of musical notes in a melody, seeking to define art to create non-art or anti-art.(18)

Friedrick Nietzsche was the central prophet of the postmodern mind with his radical perspectivism, his sovereign critical sensibility and poignant anticipation of the emerging nihilism in western culture. Like Nietzsche postmodern situation is profoundly complex and ambiguous –perhaps this is its very essence. What is called postmodernism varies considerably according to context, but in its most general and widespread form, the postmodern mind may be viewed as an open ended, indeterminate set of attitudes. There is a stress on the priority of concrete experience over fixed abstract principles, and a conviction that in single- a priori thought system should govern belief or investigation. It is recognized that the value of all truth and assumptions must be continually subjected to direct testing. The search of truth is taken to be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism.

Michael Foucault (1926-1948) attempted to show basic that an ideas about how people think of permanent truth of human nature and society change throughout the course of history. Foucault's study of power and its shifting patterns is a fundamental concept of postmodernism. Foucault is considered postmodern theorist

because his works upset the conventional understanding of history as a chronology of inevitable facts and replaces it with under layers of suppressed and unconscious knowledge in and throughout history. These under layers are the codes and assumptions of order, the structures of exclusion that legitimize the episteme, by which societies achieve the identities. Text according to Foucault, are pawns in the game of discursive transformations, and therefore subject to an interrogation of what they mean. Foucault contends that power is exercised in various local institutions: the prison, the asylum the university and so on. This water-like truth changes as the power structures changes, opines Foucault. This unreliable nature of truth, in fact, has a direct association with postmodernism.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), who is identified as a poststructuralist and skeptical postmodernist are concerned with deconstruction of texts and the relationship of meaning within text. He states that a text employs stratagems against it producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself through an entire system. Derrida attacks western philosophy in its understanding of reason. He sees reason as dominated by “metaphysics of presence”. He has also declared the indeterminacy of meaning of the linguistic signs in his famous essays, “structure sign and play in the Discourse of the Human sciences”(11-17).

Jean Francis Lyotard (1924-1999), the leading postmodernist thinker, argues that totality, stability, and order are maintained in modern society by mean of ‘grand narrative’ or ‘master narrative’ which are stories in which a culture tells itself about its practices and beliefs. Every belief system of ideology has its own grand narrative, according to Lyotard. For Marxism, for stance, the “grand narrative” is the idea that “capitalism will collapse in on itself and a utopian society’s world will evolve” (9). He further explains, “all aspects of modern societies, including science as the primary

form of knowledge, depend on the grand narrative”(11). Postmodernism then is the critique of grand narratives, the awareness that such narrative serve to mask the contradiction and instabilities that are inherent in any social organization or practice. In other word, every attempts to create “order” that always demand the creation of an equal amount of “disorder “ really is chaotic and bad, and that “order” really is rational and good. Postmodernism, in rejecting grand narratives, favors “mini narratives”, stories that explains small practices, local events, rather than large scale universal or global concepts. As Lyotard celebrates the multiple fragmental, contradictory and ambivalent nature of postmodern society, postmodern rejects he depth of subject, accept chaos and delight in surface. Postmodern does not seek to rise above chaos. Lyotard in this essay “Answering the Question what is Postmodernism” warn us. We can hear the muttering of the desire for a return of terror and suggests us to “wage a war on totality. Let us be witness to the unrepresentable”(82), for him fragmentation on celebration of chaos is deliberately form because postmodernism happily accepts it.

The *Oxford English Learner’s Dictionary*, defines absurdism as noun, “the belief that humans exist in a world with no purpose or order.” As an adjective, it is “completely ridiculous; not logical and sensible.” These definitions indicate that the world is inappropriate and the activities of human kind are unreasonable. Living in this chaotic universe no one can make his special presence. It denies the life without purpose, trying to make sense of senseless and communicate the incommunicable. Everything in this world is unjustified; we cannot find the proper justification of life. The reasons available within life are incomplete, but suggest thereby that all reason come to an end are incomplete. This makes it is impossible to supply any reason, at all.

Postmodernist or postmodern can mean different meaning from individual to individual. The ambiguity of the postmodernism is a consequence of different meaning and ways the term has been used to characterize the different fields such as social, aesthetic, economic and political phenomenon. Many writers and critics begin postmodernism having no clear definition of it. Jean Baudrillard claims that contemporary culture is postmodernism. For him, the word 'postmodernism' suggests fragmentation and trivialization of values. In the field of architecture, the word 'postmodernism' denotes the rejection of functionalism and brutalism of modern architecture. In the field of literature and art, postmodernism denotes to a break with or continuation of modernism. Postmodernism is paradoxical. It resists definition. Rather trying to explain in it fixed philosophical position or as a kind of knowledge, an effort has been made in this to elucidate its mobile, fragmented and contrary nature.

Since the publication of Mamet's work American Buffalo received many critical responses. Many critics view this drama from different perspectives. Pat Laffan describes about the American play. He writes:

American buffalo is an ensemble production of a good and original play. There are rugged rhythms and patterns a claustrophobic atmosphere and a deal of strong humor. There is hope. Donny, the owner of the junk shop represents a kind of stability, easy enough with the loss of dream and with trying rehabilitate. Bobby yet his world pretty well shaken up by Teach.(40)

Here Laffan found American buffalo as the complete play having rugged rhythms and humor. He describes it as he plays having all the qualities with a deal of strong humor.

Pat Laffan describes American Buffalo as the complete play which has all the qualities of drama. He takes it as the complete play where there are rugged rhythms pattern with a great deal of humor.

Similarly, John Lahr another critic remarks:

In the society that promotes the myth of equal opportunity, mobility is crucial. The American must always feel himself in motion, pursuing his destiny and his fortune. The result is restless, rootless insecure society which has no faith in the peace it seeks or the pleasure it finds. American buffalo superbly evokes this anxious and impoverished world. (353)

Here John Lahr describes about the mobility of the play. The American people are mobile to pursue their destiny and fortune. So this play American Buffalo shows he anxious and impoverished world.

John Lahr describes about the mobility of the play. The American people are mobile to pursue their destiny and fortune. So American Buffalo shows the anxious and impoverished world.

John Dietrick another critic describes in terms of money and language in the play. He views as:

The existence of money, economy like the existence of language requires an acceptance of signification- an agreement that one thing may stands for another. The repression of money, the attempt to escape the money economy, is the expression of anxiety concerning capacity of signifier to mislead. By implying that money is natural, John expresses his wish that money and the epistemological and ontological

uncertainty it carries did not exist –despite the advice he gives Bob to the contrary, thinks would be what they seem. (335)

Detrick seems to describe Mamet's play as the naturalistic play where the things happen in real life. It describes as a kitchen–sink-realism. There is the repression of money in every character.

Likewise Michael Bertin describes about the dialogue in the play. He writes:

Mamet's dialogue transcends the realism of grunts and groans, revealing in sheer verbal invention. In their perennial struggle to get an angle on existence, Mamet's character wrestles with speech. They fight against the unfeeling objectivity of words and pin their phrases to the mat. Their talk is elastic, visceral, funny and sad; it points to the way we all try to create ourselves through language. (404)

Here Bertin talks about the dialogue of the play which depicts the reality. Mamet's character's talk is elastic, visceral, funny and sad. Michael Bretin talks about the dialogue in the play which depicts the reality. Mamet's characters talk is elastic, visceral, funny and sad.

Regarding American Buffalo Myles Weber writes, "The protagonist undergoes the reversal of the situation, recognition of the state, and we have a certain amount of cleansing. This is what Don experiences in American Buffalo. But this doesn't happen in Glegarry Glen Ross. So, the structure is different" (137). Here he talks about reversal and recognition situation of drama which is very essential. He compares the drama written by Mamet. He shows the variation of drama.

In this way the aforementioned critics have given multiple views to the play but the issue of postmodernism has been yet abandoned. Although all these critics and reviewers examined this play from different points of view and then arrived at several

findings and conclusions but none of them researched this play from the postmodernist perspective. The play replete the theme of crisis of identity, frustration, betrayal, alienation, loss of narrative closure, language as a free flowing identity, fragmentation and so on.

Absurdism as a philosophical school of thought shares some of the concepts, and a common theoretical template, with existentialism and nihilism. It has its origins in the work of the 19th-century Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, who chose to confront the crisis that humans face with the Absurd by developing his own existentialist philosophy. Absurdism as a belief system was born of the European existentialist movement that ensued, specifically when the French Algerian philosopher and writer Albert Camus rejected certain aspects of that philosophical line of thought and published his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1995). Through this essay, he established the new notion of absurdism in the field of existential philosophy. Under the topic of “An Absurd Reasoning” he tries to define the notion of absurdism from new perspective. He comments:

What, then, is that incalculable feeling that deprives the mind of the sleep necessary to life? A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and this life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (3)

Regarding this play *American Buffalo* the characters are doing the absurdist activities. Their act of burglary at all has no meaning yet the characters are scheming

for it. First the coin was sold in 90 dollar but later when Don thinks it may worth considerably more he wants to get back that sold coin.

The two decades particularly 1970s and 80s marked the development of postmodern forms of literature, poetry painting and architecture. A strong reaction of high modern style of formalism and purity is seen in the field of postmodern architecture. Webster (1996) notes:

the term postmodernism does not come into general usage though in Britain and America until the postwar period, and it is in most intense theorization and debate takes place – the ‘moment’ of postmodernism in the sense of the intersection of cultural, political and historical forces together with a heightened awareness of the movement. (124)

So the art of the postmodern world is replete with the diversities in character. They come up with the problem with which they suffer.. In the play American Buffalo the major character as Teach, Bob and Don are the victims of frustration. The drives and frustration of these characters say fundamental about general human plight. These characters are the low class people in whole different world but these three people are in pursuit of something better world which is universal. The first act of the play was set in the Friday morning. The two characters Don and Bob are seen idle and unenthusiastic. Both are seen in a frustrated psyche. The main reason is the repression to the money which they want. Don sold the nickel in 90 dollar but later he thinks that it may cost considerably more. He wanted to get back that nickel. It was a main problem. Bob is given a task to keep an eye in the customer that as he leaves the residence they can steal the buffalo head nickel. But he had abruptly returned. Don is not happy to listen with his arrival. He makes him to listen some words about so called ethics in business, "Don:..... Well, Bob I'm sorry, but this isn't good

enough. If you want to do business deal, it isn't good enough. I want you to remember this. Just on thing Bob. Action counts. Action talks , and Bullshit walks" (4). Don wants the action to be done in a right order. But Bob only want to escape from those actions. Though Don was frustrated with the actions of Bob, he still has hope on the character. Fletcher, a gambler and a cheat card player who by using his skill and talent in cheating makes a lot of money. Don's appreciation of Fletcher shows his hope in burglary saying ". . . you put him down in the a strange place town with just the nickel in his pocket and by the night fall he'll have the town by balls . . ." (4).

The characters so- called philosophy of success and business as a high standard, but it is quite ridiculous to see in the play. Burglary and trivial stealing are for him part of business. There is no place of relationships and long associations, he advises his friend to know the difference between relationship and business. They do not have faith in any kind of relationship.

Mamet appeared on the scene of the American society was experiencing the turmoil of violence and disillusionment in the American ethos. His deep social concern and crave for ultimate success of the contemporary society compelled him to react through his literary craftsmanship against the periodic crisis. His theatrical elegance and technical accomplishment ranked him as an experimental playwright of the age. He equally emphasized on the theme of the plays. Mamet's character s are the victims of despair and the sense of emptiness the painful realization of the fact that the life cannot be lived in the nothingness make them feel; more miserable.

Gradually in the course time, American society has lost all its passion and close affinity for upward mobility and the pursuit of dreams of success. In fact the history records the facts that the very birth was inspired from the dreams of prosperity accompanied with sincere efforts for its realization. Deep religious conviction

instilled by spiritual leaders and social reformers' consistent efforts encouraged then American society to pave the way of wealth and social status emerging from it.

With the emergence of Depression phase in America, economic downfall brought ethical downfall in the American society. It creates a hopeless vacuum and an atmosphere of distrust and despair. Aimlessness, emptiness and loss of individual identity were the bitter fruits of the age. The physical world was the stage of decay In the unethical business society the streets were full of aimless wanderers petty criminals pimps and prostitutes.

Similarly Fuch (1996:58) defines:

postmodernism as the ideology of a new class of symbolic workers who specialize in self-referential techniques for manipulating signs, images and multiplying layers of representation. Postmodernism is a culture that emphasizes that there is a better world than the modern one. (22)

The characters in this play are also in search of the better world. They wanted to live in the better world to gain material prosperity. Their main way of getting prosperity is a business. In the business, Don wants business leaving all the values of relationship. For him everything is business. It is believed that hardship and consistent honest labor are the best means of success in the life. So people are encouraged to work with dedication assuring them the better fruits of success. Character ethic and work were the true guiding force for them. But in the modern civilization devoid and decline of ethical values has lost its moral sense and sensitivity for the success. In fact it has been the tendency of modern civilization to attain whatever mean dream or motif they have by adopting short cut to achieve more without labor.

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 defense on this. What are you saying here. Business. (34)

Similarly the Act II of the play opens in Don's shop where Don is frustrated is hanging up the phone as Bob enters. Don yells Bob for being late:

Don: GreatGreatGreatGreat

PauseCock sucking fuckhead. This is greatness. (59)

Mamet, with such a simple story line, effectively comments on unethical practices, an aimlessness and hollowness of the American society and above all changing implications of American dream of success. His typical obscene, verbal exercises underline the vulgarity, futility and moral practices of the practical business world.

In most cases, the postmodernist highlight the problem without pointing any solution. Many people believe that postmodernism is just a theory and not a fact. Spiro says that the postmodernism dismissal of disagrees with the postmodernist argument that the disciplines related to humanity cannot be termed "scientific". Subjectivity plays as obstacle in unearthing truth. Spiro also said that the social sciences demand for different kind of techniques than the natural sciences but it doesn't mean that an objective scientific method is not necessary. Regarding this play there is a problem of how to conduct a burglary. Each character are obsessed by the market economy. They are keeping an eye on a guy and the place where he keeps money.

Teach: The man hides his coin collection, we're probably looking the guy has a study I mean, he's not the kind of guy to keep it in the basement" (8). In this line, the characters into the play are always running before the money. Basically Teach is

so curious about the coin collector. He tells his colleagues about the money where he had kept.

In the play Mamet introduces one more character Teach who want to take all the responsibilities. He finds other scheming against him. He is the victim of his own complex. In fact in the play, he himself is the main conspirator and more violent. He enters using sluggish language for his gambling partners. Being cheated in the game he is turned restless. His anguish and anger is reflected from his extremely abusive language. He thinks to kill them in the only way to treat such people. He is so much frustrated within his partners. He accuses his cheating partners:

Teach: What the Fuck do I care?

PausecuntPause

There is not one loyal bone in that bitch's body.(14)

In the extract given above the character use the language vulgar and reductive language. This language is not the common spoken language. It is not applicable to be used in the society.

In the play for the sake of business Teach advises Don to forget Bob's friendship. In fact, the frustration of failure and hopeless life of bleak present with an apprehension of insecurity has intense the atmosphere of doubt and despair. Mamet's little business monsters have neither any time nor any place for emotions and relationships in their so called business dealing. There is least hesitation and shame in dropping Bob. Teach is really a cunning character, very skillfully convinces his expertise to Don and before ant execution of the plan, talk about bargaining. He claims fifty percent of profit. Don disapproved his demand at first, but is convinced later by Teach's cunning argument "fifty percent of money is better than ninety percent of some broken toaster"(37).

The play does not celebrate nihilism or masculinity, but explores the link between society's value and its brutality. The nature of his character's language, however originates in society. Similarly Teach is the only character unique in him. He never wants any other character being involved in the burglary. He finds himself responsible rather than other. Teach is not willing to get involved Fletch in the scheme. He is hurt by Don's decision but finally for the sake of the business deal allows Fletch to be the part of the conspiracy. It is amazing to know that despite an unethical deal the conspirators are quite systematic in their homework:

Teach: Somebody watch for the cops work out a signal.

Don: Yeah.

Teach: Safety in numbers

Don: Yeah

Teach: Three men job

Don: Yeah

Teach: A division of labor (pause)

Don: Yeah.

Security, Muscle, Intelligence, Huh? (52)

The words used in the play as planning, muscle, intelligence are key words but lack of ethical motif all their assets seem futile. So all the characters work or planning goes vain.

At the end of the Act I Teach as a party if physical preparation leaves to have a nap. Don is busy with setting contact with Fletcher. Don as the proprietor of the business is looking more worried and anxious. His anxiety is apparent through his words a "Fuckin business" (53). He himself finds this business nonsense.

The whole play shows the corruptness of the whole civilization. In the emptiness of corrupt civilization people are compelled to utilize all their energy and potential for quite trivial things. It is really a tragedy of a land of opportunity where now things like casual burglary are turned as the source of opportunities and more painful matter is that people have any hesitation to adopt these things as part of their life. It is complete surrender to the circumstances and consequences too. Fraud and deception are the common, normal business devices and greed for money and false professional pride are the outcome of delay of values.

The second Act of play opens at the same time place – the junk shop of Don. Don is waiting for Teach and Fletcher where enters. Being frustrated by Bob Don has expelled him from the plan. So Don is not happy with the presence of Bob. As a result Bob is not welcomed during his arrival. Bob said that he has a buffalo nickel and if Don is interested he wanted to sell it. Don's way of talking is rude.

Bob: I came here.

Don: For what?

Bob: I got to talk to you

Don: Why?

Bob: Business

Don: Yeah?

Bob: I need some money. (59)

Regarding the play the unethical and general practice of moral values have been depicted. Teach is the character representing modern American society admits that "The country is founded on this" (73). The uncertainties and oddities have made American Society to be suspicious and doubtful about everything. Teach is now really afraid of the success of their conspiracy, the so called business deal. According to him

for definite success secrecy must be maintained. As the plan is now disclosed to many, he is doubtful about its successful execution. Teach as the violent braggart feels need of a weapon which makes him assured and comfortable. This shows the changing American society which believes in material prosperity. For them violence cheating, deceits and betrayal are the ways to be strong and survive.

Teach and Don still waiting for Fletcher, meanwhile they are talking about their plan as if they are giving a finishing touch to it. Once again unexpectedly, Bob is at the door. Teach is not willing to allow him inside. But Bob insists and he is allowed to get inside. Now he is with news that Fletch for whom they are waiting is mugged up, his jaw is broken and is admitted to hospital. Bob is again, trapped because of his suspicious nature. Teach being frustrated about the scheme hits violently to Bob to get information from him. Don, too forgetting Bob's loyalty and friendship, supports Teach. They both suspect that Bob's intention is to make their plan flop. But finally knowing Fletcher is really hit by some Mexicans and is admitted to certain hospital. Now Don is sympathetic pitiful for Bob and ask burst out against Teach and ask him to get out from the junk shop. The environment over there was noisy. Teach is hurt by Don's attitude. He feels insulted that he was honestly working for Don and he is going to be thrown from the plan. Don is, too aggressive to threaten Teach. Being insulted Teach was so much humiliated and he started cursing Don. He threw all the things kept in the junk shop. He curses Don as, "Teach: "Get out of here?" And trash? I'm doing this for you. What I have do wreck this joint apart? He told you that he bought it in a coin store?" (100).

When Don threatened to Teach he cannot tolerate all his treatment. It was totally different which he has not expected from Don. He in a tone of utter distrust curses the whole world.

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
Every God.Forsaken Thing.(103)

This is what the realistic picture of corrupt contemporary society which shows no any sign of evolution in the life of a man and in the social fabric. The lawless illegitimate world is full of lies. There is no conscience and ethical parameters to discriminate right and wrong. The emotional concern and relations are regarded of less value than the individual upliftment. And probably, devoid of ethical platform in an erection of the castle of dreams and success are the strong reason of the failure and the delusion of the dream. Teach by the end of the play deservingly admits, "We all are like the caveman"(103). Certainly there is a kind of repentance and confession. Here Teach appears as a mouthpiece of Mamet, is worried about deterioration of mankind. The cultural legacy ethical values and above all passion for American Dream are no more existing in modern world. But in a dire frustration when Teach realizes that they all are living still like cavemen, it is an absolute failure of American dream.

Mamet in American Buffalo effectively employs the tool of parody to focus on contemporary American society. In an interview after the performance of the play Mamet himself analyses as, "American Buffalo is about an essential past American consciousness which is the ability to suspend an ethical sense and adopt in its stead a popular adopted mythology and use that to assuage your conscience like everyone else is doing" (123).

Mamet's outstanding technical accomplishment supports his thematic presentation in *American Buffalo*. His peculiarities of using fractured utterances, pauses and indecency of verbal practices underline his cause rather he says much through unsaid. Though he is criticized for his obscene, bold and outrageous language of his characters it focuses on desperation, immoral ways of interaction of the society leading toward the failure on both material as well as spiritual level. In a dark and discolored space unethical business minded society there is no place for realization of multi-colored desires and dreams. This delusion and degeneration compels the people to be frustrated in their life.

Conclusion

American Buffalo focuses on the issue of identity crisis, fragmentation, frustration, alienation and absurdity in the play. It is a postmodern play replete with the theme of interminable struggle of the human beings for existence. The play comments on the unethical business practices, aimlessness and hollowness of the American society. Through the character Bob the playwright has shown that betrayal and cheating are the prime requisite of contemporary corrupt civilization. There is the exploration of the problematic language, friendship and masculinity.

Similarly betrayal is understood as any violation of trust in the play. The protagonist Don is betrayed in the play by the character Bob. He betrays Don for his self-interest. As the result of betrayal Bob was wounded. So this play subverts the crisis of trust to each other. Besides that the play is the manifestation of the reflection of the behavior of the materialistic world. People are deceived in the contemporary world in terms of their own vested interest. Every people are struggling for their existence. There is the conspiracy in the play. Bob's conspiracy upon don is seen pre-determined and pre-organized.

Finally, Mamet's writing expresses the satire up on the contemporary American society. The language of the middle class people is totally vulgar, reductive and abusive. Mamet's major achievements is then concern his use of language, his social examination of professional and private betrayals. He had the ability to capture the anxieties of the individual. It has the open-endedness, heterogeneity, alienation and fragmentation in the play.

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is admitted to hospital. Furthermore Mamet shows the problematic relationship of the character. Mamet satirizes urban vanity, i.e. desire for the money. At last Mamet draws the picture of contemporary people's activities and society. So, it is the story of men's interminable struggle of existence.