

Comparing the Works of Sam Shepard with Other American Playwrights

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Abstract: The focus of the article is on the comparison of Sam Shepard's creative works with other American dramatists.

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At first, comparing Shepard's dramatic works with the plays of O'Neill, Miller, Albee, Bigsby analyzes how such characteristic themes of American drama as the family, the image of America, problems of self-identification, generational conflict have been refracted in the playwright's work in a new way. Noting the influence of music on Shepard's literary style, in particular Kerouac's ideas about the jazz structure of text and characters, Bigsby speaks of the non-linear narrative of the playwright's plays.

Bigsby argues that Shepard "was a product of the 60s" and reveals the relationship and influence of theater practice on the playwright's work. The critic was able, avoiding the retelling of Shepard's plays, to generalize the entire creative experience of the playwright (by 1994), outline the main ideas and themes inherent in Shepard, show the stylistic features of his style, and give a deep analysis of his individual works.

The 1987 book *Metaphorical Scenes by Sam Shepard* (1) by Cincinnati theater scholar Linda Hart is also worth noting.

Linda Hart, like most American scholars, considers Shepard's plays in isolation, one after another. If Bigsby, noting the diversity of Shepard's artistic nature, writes about how different facets of his talent manifest themselves in dramaturgy, then in Linda Hart Shepard's book, the playwright and Shepard the actor exist as if in parallel, without intersecting in any way. Not considered in the book and stage incarnations of Shepard's works. American criticism, in general, does not consider it necessary to trace the life of this or that play on the stage. At best, the first productions of the works are mentioned.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the very analysis of the plays offered by Linda Hart is quite original and interesting. If about the later works of Shepard, about his so-called. Quite a lot has been written in the "family trilogy", then Shepard's early plays, on which, in fact, he worked out not only his pen, but also the main themes of his work, critics, as a rule, omit, without attaching special importance to them. Here one cannot fail to note the merits of Linda Hart, who gave, probably, one of the most profound analyzes of these works in American criticism. The interest in the work of the playwright is also indicated by the reissue (first edition - 1987) of the supplemented monograph by Don Shui "Sam Shepard".

The book is a solid and detailed biography of the playwright, like the books of Tucker and De Rosa. Nevertheless, for this study, the material included in the book can be called literally invaluable, since it is and only in this book (in addition to periodicals) that one can get information

about the last years of the playwright's work, in particular, about the Shepard Play Festival organized in New York in 1996 by the Signature Theatre.

Summarizing the above, it must be said that, despite the huge number of books, interviews, magazine and newspaper articles about Sam Shepard, neither in periodicals, nor in monographs, nor in dissertations of American graduate students (Shepard wrote about 60 dissertations at various universities in America) no attempt was made to consider Shepard's work not only from the angle of certain social problems in America or in the context of the Off-Off-Broadway theater, but as a reflection of modern aesthetic thought and the world literary process as a whole.

In the study of the candidate of art history K.V. Novikova "Dramaturgy of Sam Shepard and Some Problems of Postmodern Aesthetics" the author hypothesizes that the features of Shepard's dramaturgy, his ideas and images, the language and structure of his plays are closely related to such a modern phenomenon as postmodernism.

Moreover, like every real, great style, like baroque or romanticism, postmodernism covered all areas of human culture, manifested itself in various types of art, was reflected in modern everyday life, rejected old values and created its own special worldview. We agree with Novikova's hypothesis that Shepard writes in this style. However, not all of Soma's works are written in the postmodern.

That is why, when referring directly to the work of Sam Shepard, many questions are raised by the periodization of his plays. On the one hand, there are clear stages of evolution in his dramaturgy and, consequently, a certain heterogeneity in the use of artistic means. Thus, starting with abstract one-act plays ("collages" in the avant-garde style) at an early stage, the author's style continues to change already on the material of a larger form. A decade later, there is a complete change of direction, and, abandoning the abstract in favor of traditional forms. Shepard creates plays that continue the traditions of the classics of American drama - Y. O'Neill and T. Williams. After a short break, which Shepard devotes to working in cinema, writing screenplays and prose, he returns to the dramatic stage with works of a generalizing nature, reflecting all the previously formed aesthetic views of the author, his approaches to art and perception of the theater. Such a diversity of the author's ideas explains the diversity of opinions of critics, and the periodization of his work causes a lot of controversy.

Thus, according to Richard Gilman, "Shepard's works are not subject to division into periods, stages of growth and development. The only exception is the later plays, which constitute a separate group" (2).

William German is also cautious about dividing Shepard's work into periods, but sees in them stylistic differences at different stages of creativity: "It is too early for Shepard's career to divide his work into" periods ", but later plays (meaning" Family Trilogy "and the play "Crazy Love") are distinctly different in their manner from his earlier works and from the works on which he worked from 1968 to 1976" (3).

Ross Westson, in contrast, offers a fairly clear classification of Sam Shepard's plays. At the same time, the critic is based not so much on the chronological as on the thematic principle. The first group of so-called "early" plays include plays from 1964 to the early 1970s. Mica Westson refers, for example, to "Chicago" ("Chicago"), 1965, "Red Cross" ("Red Cross"), 1966. "Mother Icarus" ("Icarus's Mother"), 1965. The second group of plays, according to Westson, make up works devoted to the creative search of a gifted and talented person for his life purpose and place in art (plays "Cowboy Mouth" ("Cowboy Mouth"), 1971, "The Tooth of Crime" ("The Tooth of Crime"), 1972. "Suicide in B Flat" ("Suicide in B Flat"), 1976, "City of Angels" ("Angel City"), 1976 and some others). The third group includes the so-called "family plays" - "The Curse of the Starving

Class" ("Curse of the Starving Class"), 1977, and "The Buried Child" ("Buried Child"), 1979. In a certain respect, this also includes the play "The Real West" ("True West"), 1981, touching both the problems of family relations and issues of creativity.

As can be seen from the typology proposed by Westson, the main difficulty is caused by the fact that works with different themes and issues were created almost simultaneously, which makes the chronological principle unacceptable.

Separate, affecting a wide range of problems and not included in this classification, as it seems to us, are Shepard's bright works such as "Fool for Love", 1983, and "A Lie of the Mind ", 1985.

And, finally, completely different from previous plays are the works "Handsome" written by Shepard on his "return" to the theater, where the author, as if turning back, sums up his work ("Simpatico"), 1993, "When the World Bloomed" ("When the World Was Green"), 1996 "Eyes for Consuela", 1998, and "The Late Henry Moss", 2000.

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