

The Main Components of Postmodernism in Contemporary American Drama; A Postmodernist Reading of Sam Shepard's Plays

Moslem Aeini¹, Seyed Mostafa Mokhtabad-Amrei^{2*}

¹Master of dramatic literature, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University (TMU), Tehran.

^{2*}Prof. in Dramatic Literature, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University (TMU), Tehran.

*E-mail: amrei@aftermail.ir

ABSTRACT

Postmodernism and its main components have been reflected in contemporary American drama by affecting both the form and content. American playwright Sam Shepard has usually drafted plays on the family and the collapse of its governing system, somewhat reflecting the prevailing state of humanity in the postmodern era. The main problem in this study is finding out the quantitative and qualitative impacts of components of postmodernism on Shepard's plays. The study also aims to describe the link between cultural syncretism, paradox, uncertainty, intertextuality, return to the past, irony, fading the storyline, delusion and fiction, the foundation of social breakdown, critical discourse, demythologization, mashinism, consumption dominance, play with words, pluralism, transcendenceism, and postmodernism-caused historicism with Shepard's plays, and find out how they affect the components of Shepard's plays. This study evaluates the above impacts within both form and content and determines the state of each of them in Shepard's plays.

Keywords

Postmodernism, American Drama, Sam Shepard, Play, Main Components.

Introduction

Postmodernism; a General Review

Postmodern art carrying the beauty of "pluralism" has been well reflected in two articles, one by Ihab Hassan entitled "Postmodern Art and Pluralism", and the other by Jean Francois Lyotard entitled "The Postmodern Condition". Modernity and postmodernity, and likewise modernism and postmodernism hold at least two special meanings, including 1) a historical period and 2) a set of political, economic, social, philosophical, cultural, literary, and artistic characteristics and identifiers (Nazerzadeh Kermani, 2011: 453). Postmodernism, in fact, can be defined as a situation in which the previously recorded data have been maintained, accessed, and replicated for the first time as a result of emerged technologies. The past seems to be involved in the present or made available nowadays. That is a situation where the relationship between the present and the past has been changed (Kaner, 2015: 28).

Perhaps defining the concept of "cutting up" used as a technique by both modern and postmodern artists can be helpful. The modern artist cut up a phenomenon to show its hidden and harmonious

angles and give us a uniform image, but the postmodern artist cut up a phenomenon to reveal its differences, paradoxes, and contradictions. "Deconstruction" itself holds a set of interpretations among theorists and critics of postmodernism. Deconstruction is introduced as a kind of postmodernism or a branch of its trends. Deconstruction always provokes the concept of center-margin discourse and appears with a phenomenon called "defamiliarization". According to Glenn Ward defining postmodernism in its multiple meanings, postmodernism is not in a quite literal sense a school of thought, nor is it a consolidated thought movement with a predefined goal or perspective, and holds no single theorist or spokesperson (Ward, 2014: 15). In his collection of articles entitled "Critical Theory: From Frankford School to The Postmodern School", Douglas Kellner expands his views as follows, considering Frederick Jameson's views on postmodernism: "Failure to influence on postmodern image culture has been replicated in postmodern trends, i.e., trends that are said to be empty of the characteristics of the individuals and forces of modernism and modern nature". Both trends and postmodern texts are depthless, superficial, and external, and have been lost contentless and

meaningless in the absurdities and councils of the same period with no relation to the past (Kellner, 2013: 51). Stephen Melville drafts "postmodernism reform has acquired a special cultural validity, but its value and meaning(s) look more ambiguous than ever in many aspects" (Kaner, 2015: 127).

Basic Elements of Postmodernism in Sam Shepard's Plays

1. Cultural Syncretism

Cultural syncretism appears in various forms in Shepard's plays. The play "Buried Child" is a pretty explicit example of this feature, in which the connection between the past and the present of the characters, the relationship between the past and the present, as well as the discussion between the generations, indicate the conscious use of this intercultural element by Shepard. Cultural syncretism is defined as collecting and incorporating styles, ideas, perceptions, and everything from a culture other than the sought culture. By these definitions, all creative works can be said to be syncretic. Although cultural syncretism is seen in other courses, postmodernism has profited the most from it so that we can outline syncretic postmodernism as a leading branch of global art and literature. The other play in which this element has appeared is "True West".

This component is shown in the play as traditional art against modern art, by illustrating a relationship between the two brothers and their kinship with the roots and traditions of the past. "Austin" and "Lee" are two brothers who differ in characters and are belonging to separate thoughts and arts. In the play, Austin is the representative of modern art and Lee belongs to the traditional art and conventional way of thinking. This component is also visible in the play "The God of Hell", where the contrast between conventional and modern art is shown by evolving the characters of "Frank" and "Emma". The play "The Curse of the Starving Class" has also been drafted similarly to show the fall of past and common values among family members and the unusual behavior of characters, especially children "Wesley" and "Emma", following the emergence

of science and new technologies in society. It is defined and considered in this framework. The play "The Late Henry Moss" also holds the same feature, where we see the contest and union of the past and present characters of "Henry Mousse", though using the character of "Consuela" as an Indian and innate Spanish-Mexican lady is another proof of this claim. The one-act 1965 play Icarus's Mother has also profited largely from cultural syncretism so that in this play nature-industry, environment-pollution, and tradition-modernity confrontations are visible. The politics-art relationship and its connection as one of Shepard's most important components are elegantly visible in two of his plays "When the World Was Green" and "Red Cross". In the play "When the World Was Green", Shepard has perfectly cited politics and art by depicting the relationship between the characters of the play, a young reporter girl and an old prisoner. The play "Red Cross" likewise uses conceptual and semantic implications for politics, sports, and social and political phenomena. Such an influential component also appears in plays "Cruising Paradise", "Simpatico", "Fool for Love", "A Lie of the Mind", "The Tooth of Crime", and "Angel City". As a fundamental component of postmodernism in Shepard's plays, cultural syncretism has identified, recognized, and correlated these plays to other social, cultural, and political phenomena.

2. Paradox

The paradox is another fundamental component of postmodernism in Shepard's plays. The paradox can be described by various definitions, but in fact, it is originated from the Latin word "Paradoxum" which itself is composed of two terms "Para" (opposition) and "Doxa" (opinion and thought). The paradox in the play "Buried Child" is visible both in the creation and performance of the characters. The character "Vince" in the play, who is the grandson of the family is blended with the paradox behavior, or the character "Tilden", who is the father of Vince, adds to the paradox by showing vague behavior everywhere in the play. In the play "True West", the paradox appears in showing the position of the characters and accepting their role. Throughout

the play, we see vagueness and paradox in the characters and actions of the two brothers by altering their roles, as well as efforts to take each other's roles, to be satisfied with the roles, and multifaceted concepts. A paradox is also shown in a pretty interesting and sensible way in the play "The God of Hell", where characters "Welch" and "Haynes" in the play and their semantic connection with the general concepts add to the paradox. The paradox and its connection with ambiguity are well seen in Shepard's other plays such as "The Late Henry Moss". Events in "The Late Henry Moss" are due to vaguenesses that happen in the presence and absence of "Henry Moss" and his death and revival, as well as the presence of an innate woman Consuela. The play "When the World Was Green" links itself directly and indirectly to ambiguities and paradoxes in Shepard's works. Even the play's name itself carries a big semantic and conceptual paradox when it narrates an old chef in the prison and his relation with a reporter. The beauty of paradox and creating this component can also be seen in the play "Cowboys #2", in which the past and present connection of the characters "Chet" and "Stu" and the symbolic double-walker presence of the two characters called by Shepard as Man I and Man II adds these conceptual and semantic paradoxes. The plays "Red Cross", "A Lie of the Mind", and "Killer's Head" also are full of citations to social, political, cultural, and historical issues, showing a kind of paradox and vagueness. A paradox is also one of the best and most influential components in the play "The Tooth of Crime". The paradox in this play is about a jazz musician and his fame and popularity in society and connections with crime. The character "Hoss" commits suicide and no one finds out why Hoss who carries huge fame and power has to commit suicide for the sake of a peddler shrewish "Crow".

3. Uncertainty

Uncertainty or the "uncertainty principle" is among the basic components in postmodernism and relevant works. Although uncertainty is difficult to define, it is apparent in many of Shepard's plays. In postmodern plays and some of Shepard's plays, uncertainty appears by impacting the story and narrative structure, as well as in the

characterization. The play "Buried Child" is among these works in which uncertainty has affected the story and character. Uncertainty in the story and narrative structure of the play "Buried Child" correlates to the behavior and actions of the characters. The general scope of this play and what comes to the mind upon reading the text all support whether the characters are all gone or are alive who behave like the dead in the spirit world. In fact, in uncertainty, all phenomena are dealt with so that all statements and measurements are probabilistic and cannot be stated reliably. The play "True West" actually shows the collapse of characters "Austin" and "Lee" due to the lack of correct and logical result in the story, as well as the fate of the characters. Some of Shepard's plays convey uncertainty in the space created and even theatrical location. There is also a variety of space creation and the so-called using unconventional spaces in the plays "Tongues", "Cowboys #2", "Kicking a Dead Horse", and "Savage/Love". In these plays, Shepard does not refer to any special space, and time and place have been used conventionally.

4. Intertextuality

Intertextuality is another postmodernism component visible in Shepard's plays. The term was first introduced in 1966 by Julia Kristeva, but according to Makaryk in the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory, intertextuality is a common term in the literary and linguistics theory of the text (Makaryk, 2011: 72). Intertextuality indeed indicates that the meaning of the text is formed by other texts. The play "Buried Child" continually links the characters to the past and their memories and defines familiar stories, especially Holly's wedding ceremony and/or constructing a memorial statue of his son, as well as the role of television as an integral part of the family even it is a grainy black and white device. Likewise in "True West", we see references to the story of the film, besides concepts such as presenting and criticizing the American film industry. But "The God of Hell" is among the plays in which intertextuality is well illustrated. Advertising and creating advertising elements, and the proximity of this element with themes such as biscuits and flags and advertising tapes by

"Welch" with threatening and frightening themes taken from the works of "Harold Pinter" are good examples of producing this component in the play. Such topics can be frequently found in some of Shepard's works. For example, in the play "Icarus' Mother", the military operations by a jet and confrontation and showing such an air maneuver in public where the characters are in a picnic, as well as showing the crash of a jet plane and drawing its space in the play, are considered as beautiful intertextual events. Shepard's utilization of intertextuality is also well understood in works in which traces of the art of music are seen. Plays such as "Cowboy Mouth", "The Tooth of Crime", and "Tongues" have also profited from using music as an intertextual element. Topics, e.g., cinema, sports, advertising, music (especially New Orleans traditional music, rock, and rock and roll music), as well as globally famous music and sports characters, are principal elements used by Shepard related to intertextual elements.

5. Return to the Past

Postmodernists largely use this component, especially in dramatic literature, insofar as it has become one of the aesthetic elements of postmodernism. In fact, in return to the past, we can evaluate and organize past events. The same also happens with the characters in Shepard's plays. The aesthetic principle behind this postmodern technique is looking for achievements and sometimes satire and ridicule. The play "Buried Child" and the way of narrating the memories by the mother of the family "Holly", as well as repeating the past and the bittersweet memories and the story of the death of the son of the family "Ansel", all confirm the use of this technique by Shepard, which is repeated in another way in the play "True West". In "True West", the past of the characters and the two brothers and the memories of their father against the memories of "Austin" and "Lee" and their presence and role in American society have shown this postmodernist component. The play "The God of Hell" also uses the same technique and links the characters of "Frank" and "Hines" to the past and create deep semantic implications. "The Late Henry Moss" is another play in which the effect of this component is visible. This play reminds the

past of the two brothers and narrates the memories of the character of "Henry Mouse" everywhere in the play. Return to the past is also flows through other works of Shepard, including the "Cowboys #2", "Cowboy Mouth", "Tongues", and meanings of the unknown past of characters, along with their golden memories and how they became different (mechanized) human beings. Such features have led to more intersection and overlap with postmodernism.

6. Irony

The irony is among the components of postmodernism and influences Shepard's plays. The irony originates from the Greek word metonymia which means altering the name. Literally, irony means a sardonic expression and refers to a text with two different (far and near) meanings. "Marry Knowles" and "Rozmund moon" in "Introduction to Metaphor" and to separate and proximate these two say "this is presumably the first time for most of us to be introduced with metaphorical language while reading texts such as novels, plays, and poetries" (Knowles, moon, 2006: 93). The irony in Shepard's plays shows itself in two ways. First, in the Shepard play's titles and/or names. When reading the text of the plays, we encounter many ironies that Shepard has included in his play subtlety. The play "Buried Child" refers sardonically to the collapse of family between generations, and especially in contemporary America, and has well reflected the impact of this postmodernist component, as referring to the name that by itself is ironic. The play "True West" also refers sardonically to the connection and blood ties between family members and confrontation and conflict between two brothers (Austin and Lee). The connection and hints of these problems in the play are possible by including ironies from the social and cultural system of the West. "The God of Hell" is the next play in which irony is evident. Shepard's pointed criticism of the Republican and Conservative parties in the United States and his ironies to social, political, and cultural phenomena have launched the play to national fame. In this era, Shepard talks about the threats of nuclear war and the associated infrastructures, as well as

propaganda and its impacts on different walks of life. In the play "Curse of the Starving Class", Shepard uses the word curse as an irony to the class system and the various walks of life of crisis-stricken American society. That is a family that seems to have everything but suffers from the lack of communication and chaos in their lives. And as the mother of the family "Ella" fancies, they have no choice but to immigrate and leave America to pursue their imaginary dream. "The Late Henry Moss" is also full of ironic references to war and its connection to the collapse of the family structure and the children's vagrancy and homelessness. Shepard's biggest irony in the play may be giving the family photos to a taxi driver by Henry Moss. In plays such as "Icarus' Mother", Shepard uses again his favorite ironies and subtlety condemn war and military operations, as well as the atomic bombing. In other words, Shepard also refers to problems such as the politics of racial and ethnic discrimination (in *When the World Was Green*), the decline of contemporary America and the critique of industrialization (in *Cowboys #2*), loneliness and the decline of man and unwanted isolation (in *Tongues*), the end of the golden age of the Wild West (in *Kicking a Dead Horse*), the problem of human identity (in *Simpatico*), the critique of the American educational and cultural system (in *Savage/Love*), and ultimately the relationship between art and cultural vulgarity (in *The Tooth of Crime*). According to Roman Jakobson, it is irony and metaphor that form the literary language. Jacobsen blends metaphor and irony in his famous work and, related to aphasia, points out that "metaphor is based on similarity and irony is based on proximity" (Payne, Todd, 2007: 78). The play is also a literary style with its own literary language, and in fact, irony serves as the basis for creating the literary language of Shepard's plays.

7. Fading the Storyline

Fading the storyline appeared in American dramatic literature upon the emergence of new movements in the world of literature and art. Fading the storyline of plays in its contemporary era is a factor hindering the loss of audiences. Jean-François Lyotard's theory of the death of

metanarratives and the skeptical view of narratives and metanarratives further inflamed this course. Although Lyotard also puts postmodernism among the metanarratives, it has failed to show itself as a dominant current on art and literature. Fading the storyline of many Shepard plays can be seen in some way. The playwright more focuses on events than on a specific plot. The plays "Buried Child", "True West", "The God of Hell", "The Curse of the Starving Class", and "The Late Henry Moss" all refer to the confrontation of the characters instead of storytelling and lack of a clear storyline. A fundamental technique in Shepard's plays is using multiple sub-narratives, making it hard to distinguish narratives from stories. This is well shown in the play "Icarus' Mother".

Shepard uses other techniques, such as story cut up, as well as the lack of connection and coherence of the story in his distinct play "Cruising Paradise". What happens in some of Shepard's plays, a clear example of which is obvious in the play "Angel City", is simultaneous using two techniques of narration and character cut up. Another play in which we can see fading the storyline is "When the World Was Green". In this play, Shepard has approached fading the storyline by using monologues that are separate from the main body of the play, as well as using the structure of the gathering instead of the act or the stage.

8. Delusion and Fiction

Delusion and fiction have appeared as one of the components of postmodernism in Sam Shepard's plays. Postmodern characters carrying delusion and fiction undergo fundamental changes in their lives. "Buried Child" is among plays in which the element of delusion and fiction is used aesthetically. This is well shown by the behavior and moods of the characters in this play, which are living with an endless imagination. The reactions and general space of the play and the reaction of the characters, especially "Doggie" and "Holly" and their son "Tilden", who like a psychotic patient is constantly moving in and out of the house and his efforts to explore and plowing the past illustrates this point. In "True West", the appearance of this component in the

character of the mother and her wonderful return, which has been revived as a ghost to see the dispute and the fall of the two brothers, has given the play a strange space. "The Late Henry Mouse" is the next play reflecting this component gracefully. The behavior and act of "Henry Moss" and his relationship with a native woman who has captured his souls like a witch, as well as incorporating these events and the death of Henry Moss and seeing this situation by his two sons "Earl" and "Ray" are good indicators to prove this topic and the existence of delusion and fiction in the characters of this play. The play "Cowboys #2" also has characters who are living with delusion and fiction. The characters of "Chet" and "Stu" in their course from the past Wild West to the modern West, filling the distance between reality and imagination, and in fact, their confrontation for life and death between dream and reality are well illustrated. The reader will never recognize the gap created by delusion and fiction. What is depicted in "Tongues" on delusion and fiction is the existence of an unknown character of a "talker" who constantly repeats sentences, while simultaneously seems to tell these completely irrelevant sentences by delusion and fiction. The play "Red Cross" is all about characters who are full of delusion and fiction. This is shown by "Jim" and "Carroll" with their own opinions and proverbs, especially Carroll, who feels her brain is exploding. The monologue of "Kicking a Dead Horse" is also relevant in which "Hobart Strother", who is fighting with himself to save his old objects and equipment, behaves as if he is suffering from delusion and fiction. This is visible in other monologues, including "Killer's Head", where Mason suffers from endless delusions and fiction. "The Tooth of Crime" is also one of the most important plays in which delusion and fiction are seen in its main characters, "Hoss" and "Crow". "Hoss", a music star commits suicide for the sake of a peddler shrewish "Crow", while drug use by the characters in this play is effective in creating delusion and fiction.

9. The Foundation of Social Breakdown

Social breakdown is a component of Shepard and postmodern plays. Social breakdown is in fact "a

school of philosophy and literary criticism rooted in the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and the Belgian/American literary critic Paul Duman" (Payne, Todd, 2007: 368). Although Derrida was the first to introduce the term, foundation breakdown is a kind of self-revolt, especially in texts. Derrida's definition of breakdown is more associated with the phenomenon of questioning, and "Derrida is outraged by the obvious totalitarianism arrogance in micro claims" (Apiganzi and Garant, 2012: 13). In the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory, Makaryk says "so myths contain all forms of existence, including language, concepts about themselves, and social patterns and institutions". From the perspective of structuralists and poststructuralists, all these must be demystified and show that they are optional and have been formed based on the governing conditions of society and at a certain time. But some critics also see the concept of being arbitrary as optional. From the perspective of those who believe in values, resistance, and the need to unify cultural concepts, the relativism inherent in the demythologization is neither attractive nor acceptable (Makaryk, 2011; 37-38). Shepard works to question the nature of the family, given his interest in this social and civic institution, which usually retains the tragic element within the family. Shepard somehow shows his sense of being satisfied with the social roles in his plays by criticizing the roles of each of the characters in the context of the family and the careful and planned characterization. The next technique that Shepard uses in his playwriting by employing and considering social breakdown is to tell familiar stories. But he avoids showing that the story is familiar or repetitive until the end, and thus creates one of his great plays "True West". In "True West", the decline and breakdown of the American family, and especially the character of the father in the heart of the family is well apparent. Meanwhile, a known story of Abel and Cain has been narrated. Another aspect of social breakdown in Shepard's plays is his critique of political parties and groups. For example, in "The God of Hell", this can be seen in the critique of the right-wing American party. The play "When the World Was Green" also carries such a social breakdown in which Shepard attacks them by

articulating problems such as the non-participation of social and political groups and institutions. In this play, Shepard more focuses on global issues and the associated unequal phenomena and global peace and equality and defines his position towards them. Other issues include the collapse of contemporary American society, the rise of industrial culture and associated phenomena, the questioning of American culture and art, the nonidentity of contemporary American man, and efforts to conceal a lost identity. Shepard often focuses on the critique of the American educational and academic system by ridiculing and questioning the prevailing ideals in the United States and even the private relations of individuals and similar issues.

10. Critical Discourse

Shepard depicts the decline of modern America through his critical discourse by imaging and allegory in "Buried Child" and "True West". Choosing the title of "True West" is actually a confirmation of the unreal and declining west. The critical discourse is also well shown in "When the World Was Green", where Shepard directs his criticism on US policies and the existence of secret prisons across the world and refers to those who are in prison for political and racial reasons. The critical discourse shows itself in Shepard's works with the phenomenon of feminism, as well as Shepard's consideration of women and their problems in the world, especially in the United States and Europe. In his book "An Introduction to Metaphor", Zoltan Kovecses talks about the metaphor of discourse that "in some cases of intertextuality, it is the coherence of intertextuality that is achieved through inheritance and using a specific conceptual metaphor in different historical periods" (Kovecses, 2010: 285). The critical discourse of the play "Tongues" shows various issues that the author aims to express from the words of the narrator. The critical discourse of this work is reflected through the hearing of different voices by the narrator's character. The distinguished play "Cruising Paradise" is also full of critical discourse by referring to immigration, solitude, and the isolation of the Americans, and searching these issues concerning the relationship between identity and travel. With his distinct play

"Savage/Love" (with Joseph Chaikin), Shepard deals with relationships and their quality among humans. It is a short, rhythmic play, but full of conceptual implications and themes about love and connection among educated American youth against his favorite themes, i.e., loneliness and isolation of today humans. The various topics on critical discourse in Shepard's plays are inextricably linked to postmodernism and its fundamental components.

11. Demythologization

Demythologization stands against mythology and commemoration of myths of the past and present. As one of the components of postmodernism, demythologization has greatly impacted postmodern theater and literature-drama and Shepard's plays. Theorists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Lacan have each become the most prominent de-mythologists by articulating various issues. The play "Buried Child" is indeed a kind of conflict against the patriarchy governing American society and the traditional system prevalent in the United States by showing the phenomenon of the family cut up and the gradual decline of the father's character. The play "True West" somehow shows this postmodern component in which the family and especially the mythical character of the father, who is a drunkard and a fugitive man, has lost its mythical glory. The American dream and its death in some of Shepard's plays also indicate this influential component. By referring to the American dream, "The God of Hell" tries to show the collapse and emptiness of this dream among the American social classes. The next play in which demythologization can be studied is "The Curse of the Starving Class". Conflicts between the father of the family "Weston" and the mother of the family "Ella" and replacing their roles and the superiority of the mother in this play can also be viewed as demythologizing features in Shepard's plays. Some Shepard plays also show this component in other ways and have achieved this position by using mythical narratives. Characters who sometimes were heroes of the United States today have become drunkard vagrants, like Henry Moss that become a toy of a gypsy woman "Consuela". The demythologization

is also visible in the play "The Tooth of Crime" in the character of "Hoss", who is one of the musical myths. Hoss's intention to suicide and his intentional death are the falls of American myths and a kind of death of myths in society associated with demythologization. Likewise, the fade of superior art and displacing it with priceless and low art is well reflected in the play "Angel City". By his knowledge and full understanding, Shepard works to break and discredit ancient cultures and traditions of his country and well conveys these concepts by showing the characters that have been faded in society with time. The contrast between the hopeful past and the current life of characters and the troubles they encounter has facilitated all kinds of meanings and semantic and content comparisons in Shepard's works, and demythologization had given special effects to his plays.

12. Mashinism

The mashinism is one of the postmodern components in some of Shepard's plays illustrated in the characters and the context of the play. Characters in "Buried Child" act like a car, for example, the character of "Tilden" who like a machine plows memory and pulling them out. The mother of the family "Holly" also acts like her son "Tilden" and continually narrates the memories and the death of her son "Ansel". The mashinism is shown creatively in the play "True West". Conflicts between "Austin" and "Lee" in the play and their behavior, especially their attitude towards owning a typing machine, stealing a toaster machine, and working with household instruments can be viewed as correlated to this postmodernism component. The play "The God of Hell" is also carrying this component. In this play, "Frank" and "Hines" convert into an object emitting electricity, which indicates a kind of mashinism phenomenon. Frank's behavior who sells his lambs to "Welch" at the end of the play also conveys the same concept. The character of "Welch" and the way he acts in Frank's and Emma's house, his belonging to state organizations, advertising biscuits by him, as well as doing advertising and motivating propaganda can also be viewed as a mashinism. Mashinism has seized the man in the twentieth and twenty-

first centuries, which is seldom referred to as a special optimism and aesthetics. "They all warmly welcomed mashinism aesthetics, which is an optimistic idea about abstraction in human life and the emphasis on the plain appearance of the machine. They aimed to build a modern universal style that can be propagated among all national cultures" (Apiganzi and Garant, 2012: 28-29). Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari later more described the phenomenon, using terms such as desiring-production and desiring-machines. Cowboys #2 also uses this component by showing situations such as tumult and loud sounds in the scene in contrast to the role of "Chet" and "Stu" who pass like a machine over time. Some of the characteristics of mashinism in Shepard's plays, including metamorphosis, being adjustable and controllable, monotony and routine of life, greed, and buying a car and electric appliances all are aesthetically illustrated in Shepard's plays and well show the influence of postmodernism and its components.

13. Consumption Dominance

Consumption dominance is also visible in postmodern culture. Today, consumption culture has become common in advanced societies. In his book "Postmodernity", David Lyon says "a new consumer in our time is a determination clue to know postmodernity and postmodernism" (Lyon, 2001: 98). Some characters in Shepard's plays act strangely as influenced by consumption dominance and its consequences. Elsewhere in his book, Lyon interestingly points out that "the postmodern is linked with a society in which consumerism and mass consumption govern the waking life of its members" (Heman; 101). Consumerism can even be linked to issues such as commodification, though there is no strong correlation, according to intellectuals. Consumerism and its dominance in the play "Buried Child" is shown by disputes between the tradition and the act of the characters, especially corn picking by Tilden and picking the carrots and excessive alcohol use by "Doggie" and "Vince". In "True West", the way "Austin" and "Lee" act and excessive beer drinking, especially by Lee, as well as their conflicts in the family can be viewed as related to consumption dominance. In the play

"The God of Hell", Frank sells his farm and livestock as depicted against the commodification, and Welch advertises consumable goods, all of which are examples of referring to consumption dominance in the play. Consumerism and its features can be detected in other Shepard's plays such as "Icarus' Mother", "When the World Was Green", "Action", "Red Cross", and "Killer's Head".

14. Play with Words

In most of his plays, Shepard has profited from playing with words. Play with words has frequently become an integral feature in many postmodern plays. When reading postmodernist works, especially postmodern plays, the reader often feels that the author has intentionally used some means of self-assertiveness or playfulness. A component that shows itself in this situation is the "language game". Some like Jean-François Lyotard have talked about the language game and its link to other linguistic and sociological topics and discourses. Postmodern authors, however, try to achieve their own goals or establish a subject and/or social and political implications by the language game. Paul Castanio also talks about the importance of dialogue and its tune, "the play itself is a system of dialogue" (Castanio, 2008: 151). Play with words is seen in "True West", "The God of Hell", "The Late Henry Mousse", and some Shepard's monologue and one-act plays, and becomes an integral feature of his plays.

15. Pluralism

Pluralism is among the postmodern components of Shepard's plays and has gained much attention in connotation. In simple terms, pluralism can be defined as preferring several phenomena to a single phenomenon. "Shifting from ideology toward a pluralistic state brings great and unique opportunities for all kinds of artistic expression in many ways. Moreover, it may seem to be a kind of liberation from the biased compulsory to constant innovation" (Gablik, 2008: 97). The term "multiculturalism" is also used today, but this term has been used in the United States with a more limited meaning and has caused intense

controversy" (Payne, Todd, 2007: 234). In "Buried Child", pluralism is visible so that the reader can hear the voice of each of the characters in the play, and such problems are reflected, meaning the goals and hopes of the characters parallel to understanding social and cultural issues and problems. Pluralism in "True West" also appears against the social system and the instability in the cultural structures of American society. The play "When the World Was Green" also well reflects pluralism by hearing various sounds in the play and references to other cultures. The play "Angel City" has also reflected pluralism by conceptual metaphors such as the confrontation of corruption in contemporary American society and the emergence of conservatism in modern America. Other plays such as "Cowboy Mouth", "Tongues", and "Savage/Love" can be a good expression of the influence of this postmodernist component in Shepard's plays with monologues containing deep conceptual references and implications.

16. Transcendenceism

Transcendenceism is also known as a component of postmodernism in which the word transcendenceism and surrealism are sometimes coupled, but this term was first introduced by Jean Baudrillard to describe signs that are more real than reality. Surrealism means intensifying and magnifying the truth, while the truth itself is not like that. Transcendenceism is also seen in some Shepard plays and has been well highlighted by using narrative tools and characters. Conflicts between Bradley and Dodge over the blanket and constantly shaving Doggie's head by Bradley in "Buried Child", the displacement and transformation of "Lee" and "Austin" characters in "True West", the presence of electricity and electric emissions in the characters of Hines and Frank in "The God of Hell", using the refrigerator and focusing on it in the play "The Curse of the Starving Class", the presence of a small fish and fishing by Henry Moss in the play "The Late Henry Moss", referring to weapons and war equipment as well as nuclear radiation and the laser by "Jill", as well as the writing with jet's smoke in the play "Icarus's Mother" can be considered as cases of transcendenceism. Other

plays, such as "When the World Was Green" have also well reflected this component by using cells and prisons instead of the world, and the captive man, so that the chef could not get out. The presence of an imaginary flower and the rolling of "chet" in it, as well as the sound of rain and crickets in the play "Cowboys", the presence of animal characters, especially the crablike man in the play "Cowboy Mouth", focus on the starvation of the characters and showing the golden turkey in the play, the presence of louse in the hut of Jim and Carroll in "Red Cross", using the pit by Hobart Strother in the play "Kicking the Dead Horse", the focus on the mental element of the character "Mazon" in the play "Killer's Head", Beth's head bandage in the play "A Lie of the Mind", and the presence of a fortune teller in the play "The Tooth of Crime" are among the cases of using transcendenceism in Shepard's works.

17. Historicism

Historicism is visible effectively and tangible in postmodernist works. Historicism may be viewed as a new trend, one of the main characters of which is "Stephen Jay Greenblatt". A branch of historicism later appeared as new historicism in the United States. The story of the family and its association by showing the future in the play "Buried Child", showing the reality of America, referring to Wisconsin and the extent and contemporary history of America in "The God of Hell", family migration from America to Europe and the confrontation between the two in the play "The Curse the Starving Class", changes over generations, and referring to several generations before the chef in the play "When the World Was Green", modern America against the past America in "Cowboys #2", Jim and Carol Characters in an area far from the city in "Red Cross", the confrontation of the past West with the new West in the play "Kicking the Dead Horse", focusing on indigenous culture, especially local and Indian culture, and connecting American characters with Mexican in "Cruising Paradise", rebuilding the Wild West and dreaming by Mazon in "Killer's Head", and organizing native American mirrors and showing this culture in a context that contrasts the past and the present are among the features of historicism.

Conclusion

The results of this research and what achieved by incorporating formal and semantic components of postmodernism in Shepard's plays are classified into three general categories. Knowing and considering these components can provide a deeper and more general understanding to the audience and all those who intend to read or direct these works. Comparing and matching plays and their case studies in form and content and analyzing and interpreting the elements obtained in this research for the readers seeks two main purposes, first, the impact of postmodernism and its basic components in contemporary American and Shepard playwriting, and second, knowing the formal and semantic components of Shepard's plays, which has been correctly received in the main problems of these plays. Contrary to other modern plays and styles, Shepard's postmodernist plays evade definition and framework and cope with any definition, reason, or logic. Shepard is pretty deconstructively seeking a breakthrough in contemporary performing arts and yet some pretty dramatic developments in the contemporary theater of the world, of which Shepard is one of the most influential. With his plays, Shepard has worked to use and follow the tools and facilities of postmodernism. Shepard's plays are often word-based and character-oriented but are profited from elements such as unprecedented space, light, sound, color, stage design, costume design, and a variety of music. The proof of Shepard's claim that calls his works are postmodernism is indeed receding from the common theatrical literature and the beauty of dramatic speech. The other element that adds to the attraction and postmodernist features of the plays is Shepard's stress on the audience and their revival and activities. Importantly, though Shepard's plays are substantiated in characterization, they are in some ways a symbol of contemporary America as a whole and the broken, depressed, and fragmented identities that are reflected in this world. The lack of a clear story and fading storyline are other features of postmodern plays and some of Shepard's plays. Shepard is a trial and error playwright and constantly evolving from one style to another. The attempt to include him in a

particular category or group may seem futile, but many of his plays are parallel to characteristics, origins, concepts, and motives, and discourses of postmodernism intellectuals.

References

- [1] Epigenesy, Richard, Guarantee Chris (2012). *Postmodernism*, translated by Fatemeh Jalali Saadat, Tehran: Pardis Danesh Press.
- [2] Payne, Michael. Todd, Janet (2007). *The Culture of Critical Thought from the Enlightenment to the Postmodernity*; Payam Yazdanjoo, Tehran: Markaz Press.
- [3] Castanio, Paul (2008). *New Playwriting Strategies: A Language-Based Approach to Playwriting*; translated by Mahdi Nasrollahzadeh, Tehran: Samt Press.
- [4] Kaner, Steven et al. (2015). *Postmodernism*, etc.; translated by Shiraz Group: Morteza Tavassoli et al., Tehran: Cheshmeh Press.
- [5] Kellner, Douglas (2013). *Critical Theory: From Frankford School to The Postmodern School*, translated by Mohammad Mahdi Vahidi, Tehran: Soroush Press.
- [6] Suzi Gablik (2008). *Has Modernism Failed?* translated by Fattah Mohammadi, Tehran: Minooy-e Kherad Press.
- [7] Lyon, David (2001). *Postmodernity*; translated by Mohsen Hakimi, Tehran: Ash Publishing.
- [8] Rima Makaryk, Irena (2011). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theories*; translated by Mehran Mohajer and Mohammad Nabavi, Tehran: Agah Press.
- [9] Nazerzadeh Kermani, Farhad (2011). *An Introduction to Drama Studies*, Tehran: Samt Press.
- [10] Ward, Glenn (2014). *Postmodernism*; translated by Qader Fakhr Ranjbari and Abuzar Karami, Tehran: Mahi Publishing.
- [11] Knowles, Muray; Moon, Rosamund (2006). *Introducing metaphor*, Routledge, London, and New York.
- [12] Kovecses, Zoltan (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, Edition, Oxford University Press.
- [13] Roudane, Matthew (2002). *The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard*, Cambridge University Press.
- [14] Shepard, S. (1996). *Cruising Paradise*. New York: Alfred A. Knop.
- [15] Shepard, S. (1972). *The unseen hand and other plays* New york: vintage.
- [16] Shepard, S. (1976). *Angel City, The Curse of the Starving Class and other plays*; New York: Vrizen Book.
- [17] Shepard, S. (1984). *Fool for love*, Dramastists Play Service Inc.
- [18] Brantley, B. (2006). *The Tooth of Crime*, New York: vintage.
- [19] Shepard, S. (1984). *Seven plays*, bantam books, New York.