
Creative Work of American Dramatist Sam Shepard

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Abstract: The focus of the article is on the distinctive elements of Sam Shepard's contemporary American dramatist classifications of his creative work.

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For many years, Russian literary criticism was actually isolated from the world literary process, and in particular, from American drama.

Perhaps this is what influenced the fact that a certain scheme for the development of American drama was formed in Russian literary criticism, which in historical sequence can be formulated as follows: Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. Further, the chain breaks, thus ending with the leading playwrights of the 60s. Although Albee continues to write (with great success on Broadway his play "Three Tall Women in Blue", 1992), nevertheless, he himself (in the manner of writing, in the form and problems of his works) is primarily a representative of the generation of the sixties, it was during these years that the peak of his work fell. Thus, the false impression is sometimes created that the tradition of classical American dramaturgy has been interrupted. In Russian, there are no serious literary works devoted to the work of such famous contemporary American playwrights as David Mamet, August Wilson.

Without exaggeration, Sam Shepard, a playwright recognized as a living classic, who wrote more than forty plays, can be called the most prominent representative of modern American dramaturgy. It is quite natural that his work deserves the closest attention, evaluation and thorough literary analysis. After all, Shepard is one of the most prolific playwrights of modern America, and without analyzing his works and their productions, it is simply impossible to reproduce the panorama of the theatrical life in the United States. On the other hand, the analysis of Shepard's dramaturgy will allow solving a number of important sociocultural problems, in particular, such as theater and the peculiarities of the psychology and national consciousness of the American people, theater and the peculiarities of the perception of performances, the way of thinking, the mentality of various regional strata and demographic groups, reflected in Shepard's dramaturgy.

Separate publications devoted to Shepard's work were also published in Russian. Some of the playwright's plays were translated and published. So, in the journal "Modern Dramaturgy" in 1990 under the title "Somewhere in America" his play "Curse of the starving class" was published (1), and in the journal "Theater" for 1991 - the play "True West" (2), a number of works were translated and released by Vaap editions. However, it should be noted that, except for Vaap and periodicals, Sam Shepard did not publish in Russian. Neither his plays nor his prose (Sam Shepard published three collections of short stories: Hawk Moon, Chronicle Motel, Cruising Paradise (3)).

Directly critical literature on the playwright includes, in addition to commentaries on published plays and brief information about Shepard, which can be gleaned from the book by V. Wolf "From Broadway a little away" (4), include articles by T. Butrova "American protest theater in the context of the social movement of the 60s" (5) and M. Koreneva "Dramaturgy of the American avant-garde of the 60s" (6) (with all of this material appearing at a time when many of Shepard's popular plays had not yet been written). The most complete article about Shepard, written in Russian, can be considered the work of V. Bernatskaya "The Evolution of Talent", published in the VGBIL collection "Modern Foreign Drama" (7).

This publication, in fact, consists of small annotations of a number of Sam Shepard's plays and their assessment by American critics. Individual plays of the playwright are considered in strictly chronological order. At the same time, while drawing a portrait of Shepard the playwright, the author does not aim to consider individual trends in Shepard's work, does not seek to analyze specific works of the playwright, does not include his plays in the context of the development of all American drama and theater practice, including in the 60s and 70s. But the article by V. Bernatskaya fulfilled its task - it introduced the reader to the new name and gave a brief overview of the playwright's work. The absence of a profound literary or theatrical analysis of Shepard's works can be explained to some extent by the fact that his works were practically not staged on the stage, and if they were staged, they were generally not successful. In the West, the picture is fundamentally different. Shepard's plays are on the way and the number of monographs, articles and dissertations written about him has probably already exceeded 100. Given the development and influence of new technologies, I note that Internet users have the opportunity to gather considerable information about Shepard, about his biography and bibliography, about the latest and future premieres of his works. On one of the sites on I managed to find a whole book dedicated to the work of the playwright (8). One of the first monographs devoted to the playwright was Ellen Oumano's Sam Shepard: The Life and Works of the American Dreamer (9).

Meeting with Shepard's friends, his work partners, Ellen Oumano was able to describe the turbulent biography of the playwright, who began his career at 19; From a waiter and drummer, he gradually turned into a playwright, director and film actor. Ellen Oumano included Shepard's plays in the general chronological outline of her hero's life. Analysis of the problems and poetics of Shepard's dramatic works as such was absent, however, since his plays, as a rule, are exclusively autobiographical, it is difficult to overestimate the material collected by Ellen Oumano.

In 1992, two monographs dedicated to Shepard were published at once. Both books are titled extremely succinctly "Sam Shepard". One was written by Yale University educator David De Rose (10). The second was released by an American researcher - Martin Tucker (11). Both monographs, as well as the book by Ellen Oumano, are focused primarily on describing Shepard's biography, and if De Rosa's book is interesting for theater studies by the author's original analysis of the playwright's works, then in Tucker's book, dramatic analysis is replaced by a retelling of Shepard's plays. Both books, focusing primarily on the life of the playwright, do not attempt to consider his work in the context of the aesthetic quest of contemporary American literature.

Doris Averbakh tries to find and describe the trends in the development of modern American dramaturgy and off-Broadway theater in the book "Shepard himself. Arthur Kopit and Off-Broadway theater" (12). Information about some aspects of the playwright's work can be found in John Orr's book Tragicomedy and Modern Culture: Plays and Performances from Beckett to Shepard (13), also released in 1992.

The most interesting are a number of articles published by Shepard in the quarterly Modern Drama, a special issue of the Performing Arts Journal, ed. Boni Maranka "American Dreamer", entirely dedicated to Sam Shepard, and finally published in 1993, ed. Leonard

Wilcox is a collection of articles by various critics on Shepard's plays.

One of the most fundamental articles about Shepard is an essay by the famous American theater critic C. W. E. Bigsby, which he placed in his book "Modern American Dramaturgy 1945-1990" (13). Here Shepard found himself in honorary neighborhood with O'Neill, Williams, Miller, Albee. This itself has already placed Shepard in the context of the development of classical American dramaturgy. On a relatively small volume of the essay, the author was able to summarize and show the main trends and motives of Shepard's work. Starting the article with Peter Brook's thought that "the theater is a place where the invisible can appear, that we all know that life is usually very difficult to capture" and that, to a large extent, the various arts can be explained precisely by their ability to identify and to represent the invisible through rhythms and images "(16, 74). Bigsby shows how this idea is reflected in all his work, starting with his earliest, experimental plays, Sam Shepard.

Sam Shepard, who is a pretty well-known and prolific writer, director, and actor, is virtually unknown in Uzbekistan. Although the playwright's name has appeared in numerous Russian scientists' studies on American drama, only V. Bernatskaya's study "Four Decades of Drama. 1950-1980" and V. B. Shamina's monograph "Two Centuries of American Drama" contain a comprehensive analysis affecting the essence of the playwright's work. The primary development tendencies. The author provides a thorough study of the issues with individual works in the first instance, while his work is seen through the lens of family drama in the second. There are currently no dissertation papers authored by American authors that are devoted to Sam Shepard's work.

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