

**FERNÁNDEZ-CAPARRÓS, ANA (2015). *EL TEATRO DE SAM SHEPARD EN EL NUEVA YORK DE LOS SESENTA*. VALENCIA, BIBLIOTECA JAVIER COY: PUBLICACIONES DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE VALENCIA. 222 PP.**

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In 1978, Sam Shepard won the Pulitzer Prize for his play *Buried Child*, a work that consolidated Shepard as a playwright and gave him a place in the history of American drama. After this, Shepard's work was nominated two more times and the most important academic critical works on his plays were published. Ana Fernández-Caparrós' work presents a new and thorough study of Shepard's first plays, concretely those originated and performed in the off-off Broadway New York, in order to show that Shepard became one of the most relevant playwrights of American theatre thanks to his transgressive work during the 1960s. To Fernández-Caparrós, Shepard's early theatre introduces an extraordinary dramatic encounter taking the concept "extraordinary" in its etymological sense since it offers characters and situations opposed to the ordinary. Although Shepard's early plays have not been the focus of many critical studies, the author defines these plays as "prolific, intuitive and extravagant" becoming the fundamental basis of Shepard's future plays. She considers Shepard's first plays remarkable because of the original use of language, psychologically undefined characters and the use of narrative monologues. In this sense, the author explores that part of Shepard's work that has not been studied in relation to the importance of these narrative monologues, the space of the imaginary on stage

and the multiple transformations of the dramatic space inhabited by characters constantly fantasizing in order to create Shepard's extraordinary dramatic space.

Remarkably, Fernández-Caparrós divides her work in three parts: the social and cultural context of Sam Shepard in the 1960s, a second part dedicated to the theories of the imagination on stage and a third part which introduces an exhaustive analysis of the most illustrative plays written by Shepard in the 1960s. In this context, she defines Shepard's theatre as part of the Off-Off Broadway which was not openly political but reflected the controverted socio-political situation of the time marked by the Vietnam War, the civil rights revolts and the impact of the killing of political and social activists such as Malcom X, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. As the author emphasizes, Shepard's theatre becomes the artistic response theatre had to the social instability and which implied a radical change in the performing arts in terms of theory of drama and the relationship with the audience. In this sense, Shepard's early theatre is an example of the necessity of a new way of imagining and representing. This would respond to Shepard's implication with the *youthquake*, a new generation involved in creating new poetic forms to adapt their artistic innovations to the different vital experiences they were undergoing and which brought as a consequence a total renovation of the theatre. This is Shepard's starting point with a work that rebels against the social conformists of the 1950s and the denial of the dominant values by offering others opposite to the established ones. As the author states, this allows Shepard to create characters that play and fantasize on stage sometimes with becoming rock stars.

One of the most original contributions of Fernández-Caparrós' volume is the second part dedicated to the theories of imagination. As part of this renovation of the American drama of the 1960s, Shepard constructs his theatre in a performance based on images and this is one of the things that makes Shepard's early theatre innovative and fundamental for the understanding of the American Drama of the 1960s. She asserts that Shepard's performance projects "the representation of interiority more than the traditional succession of thoughts associated to the theatrical monologue" (100). Besides, she understands Shepard's construction of the dramatic space as an illustration of the imaginative conscience of undefined characters and without personality as the beginning of a new poetics of drama that will be fundamental for his future theatre. Part of Fernández-Caparrós innovative analysis consists in understanding the character's imaginative expositions as a tool to give significance and structure to the play instead of considering it a waste of unproductive energy on stage, as many critics have stated. Thus, the desperate and at the same time comic daydreaming of the characters create a new fictional world justifying the dramatic poetics of imagination.

The third and final part of this work successfully links the author's original theoretical contribution with an exhaustive analysis of the most remarkable works of Shepard's early theatre: *Cowboys #2*, *Chicago*, *Icarus's Mother*, *Red Cross* and *The Mad Dog Blues*. Essentially, she claims that the discourse of these plays conditions the technical structure and the space of performance giving the play a sense of freedom in its expression. *Cowboys #2* is presented in the text as Shepard's example of how imagination works as an essential tool on stage to experiment with performance and conscience. In this play, as she points out, the sense of reality is lost and the traditional mimetic codes are reversed blurring the line between reality and fantasy. Together with this, *Cowboys #2* inherits certain Beckettian cyclical tone to express the significance of time however in this play Shepard introduces a different topic since the character's discussion on stage is not time but the creation of an alternative world according to their own principles. In the next play, *Chicago*, Shepard still makes his characters experience a new form of monologue. Again, there are some Beckettian influences when Shepard plays on stage with absence and places only a bathtub where the central character stays. The surrounding space is crowded with other characters that are only the projection of the protagonist's fantasies. This is what the author calls brilliantly Shepard's imaginative escapism. Through this technique, Shepard was showing the audience the physical dimension of the imaginative act. Also, it shows the ability of imagination to make visible the invisible. As the author asserts, Shepard rewrites traditional theatre by using the dramatic space to project what the character sees in his imagination. In this sense, the relationship with the audience changes radically since they have the opportunity to take part in the protagonist's fantasies. In their imaginative exercise, the audience takes the images as their own. *Chicago* is considered by Fernández-Caparrós a fundamental play in Shepard's future theatre since it already brings the solitude the character experiences in his own mind. In the same line of thought, *Icarus's Mother* continues with the exploration of the stage as the space where the characters project their inner thoughts and images. However, in this particular case, Shepard goes one step further in his dramatic experimentation and makes even more complex the character's narratives. Finally, she studies *Red Cross* and *The Mad Dog Blues* as plays that remarkably focus on the manipulation of the dramatic space and the game with imagination but also with the concept of possibility and unexpected events.

Fernández-Caparrós comprehensive study becomes an innovative work for the critical corpus of Sam Shepard's theatre. It provides a new theoretical perspective to Shepard's plays especially in her formulation of a theory of the imagination that understands the plays from a different and original perspective. This thorough study opens a new critical path in Shepard's early theatre that becomes fundamental for future studies on Shepard's and Contemporary American theatre.