

معينة و لكنها تخفى طبائع و دوافع تختلف تمام الاختلاف عن التصرفات و الأطر الظاهرية للشخصية. و يدلل البحث على تميز استخدام الكاتب لنوع آخر من السخرية الا و هو سخرية الموقف الدرامي و المقصود بها ان يختم الكاتب موقف ما بطريقة تخالف تماماً ما يتوقعة الجمهور و القراء من خلال بدايات و احداث هذا الموقف . كما يشير البحث الى نمط اخر من انماط السخرية و التى برع فى استخدامها سام شبيرد و هو السخرية الدرامية و يعنى بها تعريف الجمهور ببعض المعلومات و الخلفيات الدرامية للقصة أو الشخصيات و اخفاء هذه الخلفيات عن بعض أو كل شخصيات المسرحية و يؤكد البحث نجاح الكاتب الامريكى سام شبيرد فى استخدام و توظيف اسلوب السخرية ليصوغ و يبدع اعمالاً مبهرة و مواقف متباينة و شخصيات ثرية تنبض بالحياة و تنطق بابداع كاتبها و مؤلفها و الذى ساهم بحق فى تشكيل و جردان و ملامح الدراما الامريكية المعاصرة.

سام شيبيرد كاتباً ساخراً  
دراسة في التكنيك الدرامي

يعد الكاتب المسرحي سام شيبيرد من ابرز كتاب المسرح الامريكى المعاصر و الذى خاض تجارب ثرية و متنوعة حيث بدأ حياته ممثلاً مغموراً ثم اشتغل بالموسيقى و انتهى باحتراف الكتابة المسرحية حيث ألف و ابداع العديد من الاعمال الفنية التى يصور فيها - بأسلوب ساخر - انهيار العلاقات الانسانية و التفكك الأسرى و هيمنة الانتهازية المادية الشرسة على صناعة السينما و الترفية الامريكية و محاولة الانسان المعاصر الهروب من واقعة الاليم و اللجوء للعيش فى عالم الاوهام و الاحلام الزائفة . و لقد تناول العديد من النقاد اعمال سام شيبيرد بالنقد و التحليل الا ان توظيف و استخدام اسلوب السخرية فى اعماله لم يلقى الاهتمام النقدى الكافى و لذا يتناول هذا البحث تعريف اسلوب السخرية بوجه عام و انماطها و اسباب لجوء سام شيبيرد لاستخدام هذا الاسلوب فى مسرحياته مع تطبيق المعايير السابقة على مسرحيتين للكاتب و هى "الغرب الحقيقى" و "غيبى للحب" و يؤكد البحث ان اعمال سام شيبيرد الأخيرة تقدم اسلوب السخرية بشكل اعلم و أكثرنضجاً من اعماله المبكرة كما يبرهن البحث على ان السخرية اللفظية اقل صور السخرية استخداماً فى اعماله بوجه عام حيث اقتصر استخدامها على عناوين بعض اعماله و بعض الحوارات بين شخصيات مسرحياته حيث تتلفظ شخصية ما بحديث يحمل فى طياته معنى مناقض للمعنى او المدلول الظاهر للحديث و يشير البحث الى ان سخرية الشخصية هى اهم انواع اساليب السخرية التى استخدمها سام شيبيرد و المقصود بهذا النوع من السخرية ان تتصرف شخصية بطريقة

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**Sam Shepard as an Ironist  
A Study in Dramatic Technique**



Dr. Sahar Adel Mohamed Babgat

**Like some of his characters, Shepard's life has been full of change. From his start as a young actor who went to New York and began to write plays, to his attempts to have a career as a rock musician, to his increasing successful efforts as a playwright and screenwriter, and to his growing popularity as a movie actor, Shepard has experienced many of the frustrations as a writer and a performer which he depicts in his plays. Thus , Shepard's ironic vision reflects his rich experiences and led critics and readers to a greater appreciation of Shepard as a fine playwright in the realistic theatre**



plots and to survive in the desert because they are aware that art is not life and that theoretical experience is not the best teacher.

Besides revealing Shepard's skill as a writer, irony has the important effect of revealing the themes of the plays. In the three plays discussed in this study, Shepard shows his interest in the breakdown of the American family, the ruthlessness of the entertainment industry , the menace of progress, and the mythicizing of the cowboy. By using irony in his plays, he is able to dramatize his beliefs that parents have abdicated their responsibilities as leaders, that the entertainment industry is more interested in profit than in art, that progress is destroying land and air and that the cowboy is a lost soul in the twentieth country.

Shepard's irony seems to point to his belief that we live in a world of illusions, created not only by the media but also by ourselves . The characters whom Shepard portrays most ironically, however, are those who cannot accept themselves and their relatives as they are and behave as if life would be better if they could escape from their immediate surroundings. Example of such characters includes Eddie in Fool for Love.

the stage. The audience can both see and hear him, but the characters only hear him as an echo in their minds. He serves two purposes : to provide back ground information , as when he tells about May's experience as a young child in the cow field at night and about abandoning both families; and as on- stage director , who gives orders to Eddie which are heard by the audience but not by May and Martin, as when he implores Eddie to tell the truth about his mother's death. The Old Man's stories about the past and about his present life become almost a play within the play; his Confessions underscore Shepard's idea that the younger generation inherits many of the problems and qualities of the older generation.

The dramatic irony in Fool for Love, plays a significant part especially in revealing May's character because the audience sees May's reaction when Eddie is not in the room, they realize that her sarcastic remarks to him are meant to cover up her actual feeling. On the other hand, the dramatic irony in True West requires more understanding on the part of the audience; that is, they recognize the irony in Lee's depiction of the artist because they understand how difficult the task writing is . Further , they perceive the irony in Austin 's belief that his experiences have prepared him both to write interesting



audience knows that the person on the stage is not the character he is pretending to be . Beyond that level, however, irony of character is frequently included in Shepard's plays to help the audience understand the conflicts within human beings. He depicts most family members in an ironic way. In many cases throughout his plays, having on the surface desirable traits for family members but beneath the surface exhibiting indifference or even hostility toward their relatives

In Fool for Love, the irony of character is important to the plot development . Eddie, for example , exhibits his manliness by roping bedposts and drinking, but he is powerless against “ the countess” and is ultimately defeated at her hands. May alternately clings to Eddie and physically abuses him, leaving the audience unsure of her real feeling. These ironies build up tension in the audience and make the audience react emotionally to the play. Irony of character also helps Shepard to bring out his themes. For example, in True West , the change in Austin from a self-assured family man to a ruffian because of his producer's duplicity helps to illustrate Shepard's idea about the film industry.

In Fool for Love, Shepard uses a variation of the technique of the play within a play by having the Old Man on

between an empty dream and an appropriate one to illustrate Shepard's ambiguous view of the old and new West . This ambiguity reinforces the irony in the men's characters. Through his ironic depiction of a writer, a produce , and a drifter, Shepard debunks myths about art, the movie industry , and what it means to be a Westerner.

This study of Sam Shepard's use of irony reveals how Shepard incorporated irony in a subtle way. Shepard's later plays contain increasingly more irony of character and dramatic irony. Verbal irony does occur in several plays, but it is less significant than the other types and is important primarily with respect to the titles of the plays and as it reinforces irony of character.

In his 1980's plays, instances of irony of situation are carefully related to the plots, such as May's physical attack on Eddie, Martin's attack on Eddie, and Eddie's departure at the end of the play in fool for Love (1983); Austin's loss of his contract to his brother in True West (1980). In each case, the irony of situation is closely related to irony of character.

As Robert Boies Sharpe has pointed out, every character in all drama is ironic, if only from the standpoint that the

new teeth out, placing them in the doggie bag with the chop suey that he left on the bar. Austin concludes . “ Now that’s it is more real than Lee’s plot. The loss of teeth symbolizes the father’s impotence , Austin’s impulse to recount the story occurs significantly at the moment when he feels his own impotence keenly and when he has developed into a mirror image of his elder brother, the father’s surrogate. In fact, Shepard has said that this is an actual story of something which happened to him and his father . (39). Although Shepard incorporates it in his own play, it is not the basis for the plot. This indicates that Austin’s belief that a writer must recreate a “ true story” to be successful is also ironic. At this point , the audience realizes that Austin’s earlier project might have had just as little for the viewing public as this story would.

These conflicting images continue to clash, never quite resolved and may help to explain the final scene of the play. Shepard ends the play when he began it at night . The last tableau shows the brothers squaring off against each other , the light fades to moonlight, and the action moves surrealistically from the kitchen to the desert : “ the figures of the brothers now appear to be caught in a vast desert ... like landscape “ (p.60). Lee and Austin are left frozen “ stuck

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**It's a real thing double  
nature . I think we're  
split in a much more  
devastating way than  
psychology can ever  
reveal ... It's something  
we've got to live with.(38)**

**In that scene, some critics see that Shepard himself profited from his varied non' literary experiences and from his formal training as he developed as a writer.**

**While Lee struggles to write his script, Austin vows to earn his living by working a little of the neighborhood and stealing some toasters as Lee earlier had stolen television . Before Austin leaves, Lee confesses that he needs Austin's help in delineating the fictional characters in his play. Instead, Austin tells Lee a story about their father, A vividly detailed narrative that is both comic and pathetic about the old man's trek to the border to be fitted with a pair of false teeth by a Mexican dentist. Austin relates his attempt to do something nice for his father by taking him out to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. But the old man only wanted to drink and took his**

**we're the Same person ... He does . He's lost his mind. Old Saul . Thinks we're one and the Same." (37).**

**There's dramatic irony in Austin's perception because the audience has found out; through the brother's actions throughout the play, that the two more alike than either will admit. Another interpretation is offered by Ross Wetzesteon who sees Lee and Austin as " two halves of the Same character". (36) believing that True West is the playwright's most personal play to date" Gary Grant sees Austin as " the successful writer Shepard" while Lee is " Shepard's cowboy mouth". (37).**

**It's ironic that the brothers are one- sided that neither can achieve success in film business without help from the other if Lee is the " raw talent" , as Saul calls him, Austin the discipline and technique needed to harness that talent. About True West, Shepard writes:-**

**I wanted to write a play about double nature , one that wouldn't be symbolic or metaphorical ! or any of the stuff. It just wanted to give a taste of what it feels like to be two- sided.**

awareness that Kimmer's intuition about Lee's plot is likely true; it perceives what Austin does not about the public tastes.

During their attempt to write the play, Austin now pays lee back for his humiliating comments by berating Lee's plot saying , " It's stupid! It's the dumbest story ever heard in my life ... It's a bullshit story ! It's idiotic" ... Two lame brains chasing each other across Texas !" (p.30). Lee replies, " It's not a film ! It's a movie. There's a big difference . That's something ! Saul told me.. In this business we make movies, American movies. Leave the film to the French" (30). The brothers' conversation reflects their ironic views of each other and the public's views of the entertainment industry .

Perhaps the ultimate irony comes in the brilliant stage picture that opens act 2, scene 7 . It's nightfall again as it was at the beginning of the play, but now it is Lee who sits hunched over the typewriter working by candlelight while Austin lies sprawled drunkenly on the floor. Austin's rendition of " Red sails in the sunset " infuriates Lee, who is trying to concentrate . Conscious of the ironic reversal of the roles, Austin taunts Lee, " Now I'm the introducer"(p.38) . In his intoxicated state, Austin argues, " Here's a thought. Saul Kimmer... Thinks





After Lee and Austin have not been at work for a while , Lee starts to realize that writing is more difficult than he had previously thought. Similarly , although Austin pleads with soul that his way of life is the authentic one and his experience makes him more prepared than lee to write a true-to-life western”. He notes:

I drive on the free way  
every day.

I swallow the smog. I  
watch the news in color.

I’m the one who’s in  
touch Not him!” (p.35)

Once he begins to help Lee with writing, he realizes that he doesn’t know what a “gooseneck” is and is unfamiliar with other terms Lee uses. It is ironic that despite his protest to Kimmer’s decision to accept Lee’s screenplay, he really does not have the necessary practical experience of Lee’s plot because he believes that the outline has “ the ring of truth , ... something about the real west ... something about the land. Your brother is speaking from experience” (p.35). The audience experiences dramatic irony because of their

he will not tell Austin what it was he did. In another conversation, Lee insists that his brother “ get paid for dreamin, up a line like that”. His comment about Austin’s talent underscores his view of his brother’s art as something stupid.

Yet, he seems jealous that his brother’s occupation allows him to socialize with the wealthy people. He notes, “ But here you around talking , like you know something” (p.11). After Lee decides to get into screen writing business, he thinks writing is just a simple task :” I could be just like you then , huh? Sittin’ around dreamin’ stuff up Getting’ paid to dream . Riding ,back and forth on the freeway just dreamin’ my foo !head off “ (p.25). Austin attempts to correct his brother’s image of the writer’s life by noting that, “ It’s not all that easy .. there’s a lot of work involved “ but Lee, cynically asks: “ What’s the toughest part? Deciding whether to jog or play tennis” (p.25) . Here, he shares the worry popular conception of writing as inspiration and sweet dreams rather than as hard work, only when Lee himself sits down to write he discovers the error in his perception . The irony in Lee’s view of the process may be shared and appreciated by audience members who have tried to write something.



discipline, from , order, the intellect and reason, Lee stands for subjectivity, adventure, success, exaggeration, intuition and imagination . To sum up Shepard's point Austin tells Lee that Kimmer " Thinks we're the same person". Ironically , they are. It is further ironic that because of their physical struggle with each other, they turn the paradise described as " All the debri's from previous scene is now a desert junkyard at high noon" (p.50). The destruction of this symbol of paradise is especially significant because it is Mom's home . The irony that the men destroy their own mother's home emphasizes the apparent ease with which they can reject her values.

The contrast between Austin and Lee is further intensified in their views of art. Austin is screenwriter, a professional artist. Yet, in his early conversation with Lee, he tries to play down the importance of his talent and work. In the opening scene, Austin is seen at the table writing by the candle eight, typing to persist in his endeavor despite the fact that Lee continually interrupts him with remarks and questions. Austin describes his work as " just little research" . Later , he describes it as a " project" to be discussed with the producer Lee is jealous of Austin's success, belittle his effort and indicates that he has " fooled around a little art" himself , but

**forgotten about that.**

**(p.39)**

**After Lee has broken into one home, he describes it to Austin as :**

**Like a paradise. Kinda,  
place that sorta' Kills ya'  
inside. Worm yellow  
lights. Mexican tile all  
around . Coper pots  
hanging' over the stove ...  
Blond people moving in  
and outa' the rooms,  
talking' to each other,  
Kinda' place you wish  
you sorta' grew up in, ya'  
know.(p.12).**

**Their hesitation between desiring both the freedom of the desert and luxury of civilized suburbs underscores the irony in their own personalities . Both are torn between the romanticized notion of the drifter and the structured life of the writer. Shepard introduces the idea of internal similarity under the external differences and reveals the yearning of each to be like the other. While Austin represents objectivity, self-**

landmarks that turn out to  
be unfamiliar ...  
wandering down streets I  
thought I recognized that  
turn out to be replicas of  
streets I remember ..  
streets I can't tell lived on  
or saw in a postcard .  
Fields that don't even exist  
anymore. (49)

Both Lee and Austin long for the wide open spaces. Both men have expressed admiration for their suburban surroundings , calling them “ paradise”. Austin describes the place:

I'm looking' forward to  
the smell of the night .  
The buses. Orange  
blossoms ... Rain bird  
sprinkles ... This is a  
paradise down here. You  
know that ? we're living  
in a paradise. We've

**Austin: Well, it's been  
built up.  
Lee : Built up ? Wiped  
out more  
like it, I don't like it . I  
don't even hardly  
recognize it.(p.11)**

**The hollow triumph of acquisitive suburbia is made increasingly more clear throughout the play until scene ix reveals the set " ravaged" . Bigsby sees that " suburban encroachment has wiped out significant life, spiritual or imaginative satisfaction" . (35) .**

**Austin himself realizes the changes, implies he agrees with Lee that something vital has been wiped out when he remarks:**

**There's nothing down here  
for me.**

**There never was. When we  
were kids here it was  
different. There was a life  
here then. But now ... I  
keep coming I keep finding  
myself getting off the  
freeway at familiar**

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**In True West ... The modern West is a place guided by false materialistic gods who misjudge the efforts of men and set them at each other's throats. (42)**

**The brothers' fighting provides an ironic contrast to the civilized atmosphere of Mom's house at the beginning of the play. As William W. Demastes explains , " Lee who has opted for the desert,, ... can not avoid the corrupting influence of civilization . Like the wild coyotes of the desert, Lee's freedom and instincts are compromised by the urge for" easy picking", prowling the outskirts of civilization for burglaries, a human equivalent of coyotes raiding the garbage dumps.(34).**

**Related to the idea of setting is the question of land development in Southern California. When Lee mentions his nighttime walk into San Gabriel's, Austin is eager to know the difference between their desert and the Mojave.**

**Lee observes :**

**Lee : up here ( in the suburbs) it's different . This country's real different .**

Angels “was drivin’ crazy”, the Mojave heat is tolerable because it is “ clean” Mom reminds us with Ella, the mother, in The Curse of the Starving Class. The two female characters are infected with what Shepard considers “ the most serious new Western sickness” which is alienation from the land. That is why she seems “ remote”, lifeless and rural”. On the other hand, Shepard’s view of the old west does not seem more favorable . Lee may be the most vital and energetic character in the play but he is also violent and totally self-absorbed. Although he ridicules the idea that he need fear Saul and his kind: “ They can’t touch me anyway. They can’t put a finger on me... I can come in through the window and go out through the door . They never knew what hit gem” (31), and he address Austin as “ the one that’s stuck,” he however envies his brother for his superficial civilized life. Lee’s frustrated attempt to assimilate into Austin’s culture has led him to recognize his own unsuitability for urban life. Austin points out that the values of the old west of American myth are extinct, as he shouts at Saul: “ There’s no such thing as the west anymore ! It’s a dead issue ! It’s dried up , Saul, and so are you” (p.35).

Jeffery D. Hoepfer comments:



**epic” or “ heroic”  
Period... characterized  
by images of manliness,  
vigor mobility,  
unpredictability  
rootlessness, humor and  
violence. It is a world  
that stands in direct  
opposition to the world of  
Mom and Austin. These  
two represent the “ new  
west” the west of suburbs  
and freeways; toasters  
and color TV; cocker  
spaniels and house plants.  
(41).**

**Shepard depicts neither the old West nor the new West favorably. The new modern is a collection of junk’ . It is the west of temporary living, full freeways and empty hearts . If LA suburbs stand for the new west, the desert is their opposite. When Lee and Austin are comparing the merits of life in the desert and in the suburbs, Lee observes that heat around Los**



and as the action of the play develops, the audience is made aware of a line between civilization and lack of it , partly through the sound of the coyotes in the background. Just as Lee has come in from the desert , so have some of the coyotes. In act I, Lee becomes restless because the coyotes kept him awake at night with their yelping and walks to the mountains in the night.

In order to follow the levels of irony in True West , the audience must ponder the meaning of the title. John Lahr notes, “ Shepard is dramatizing the confusion of the west, neither pioneer experience nor earthly paradise ... its ambiguity punishes the brothers. They are infected by the twin emotions of the west : Primitive self-sufficiency and modern luxury”. (40). In True West , the west is both a geographical reality and a psychological frontier, and it is on this psychic frontier that the battle between Austin and Lee takes place. As his title implies , Shepard is asking what is the true of real west.

William Kleb observes:

The old Man and Lee are  
cheerly remnants of .. the  
“ first phase” of western  
exploitation ----- an “

Lee resolves to return to his wilderness home and rejects Austin's plea to accompany him. His experience with his brother, however, has left some impression on Lee, for he insists on taking his mother's antique China and silverware with him into the desert. Lee complains that, "I'm tired of eating outa' my bare hands, ya'know. It's not civilized" (p.56). His statement is ironic because he makes it while standing in the middle of the devastated kitchen. Lee openly renounces the life represented by his mother and brother that he had once coveted. He announces his intention never to return to a town that could "drive a man insane".

Lynda Hart observes :

Lee has come to appreciate the values of his own perilous and insecure freedom by witnessing Austin's transformation into a man of passion and aggression who desperately needs the way of life he imagines he will find on the desert (33).

The setting reinforces the ironic changes in the two brothers and it helps to bring out Shepard's views on and its effect on wilderness. Mom's house is at the edge of the desert,

satisfied in the lives of the play , but by the end, they have revealed their lack of security in their positions.

The irony in their characters is reinforced when Mom returns unexpectedly from her trip . She missed her plants . In a daze, the now dead plants hanging in the windows. Mom immediately begins to remind her sons of their former roles and fundamental differences. The mother is astounded by the news that Lee has sold a script and Austin has not. Her surprise is evident in her reply : “ Lee did ? ...Not you? Mom also voices her disapproval of Austin’s plan to accompany Lee to the desert , insisting that her younger son is “ too skinny” to survive in the desert . The sudden arrival of Mom serves as a test to dramatize Austin’s lack of desert qualities. Unlike Lee, Austin abjectly offers to clean up the “ mess” , he throws Lee’s shirt to him so that he can look more presentable. It is ironic that she talks to her grown sons as if they are children. When the two brothers start fighting. Mom responds, “you’ll have to stop fighting in the house. There’s plenty of room outside to fight. You’ve got the whole outdoor to fight in” (p. 57). Since the house is already in such disorder and the son’s fight would make no difference , the mother’s comment sounds ironic.

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**Lee : It's not  
something's you learn  
out of a boy scout  
handbook!**

**Austin : well how do you  
learn it then!**

**How're you  
supposed to learn  
it ! ( pause)**

**Lee : ya just learn it,  
that's all. Ya'**

**learn it' cause ya'  
have to  
learn it. You don't  
have to  
learn it. (p.48)**

**In one of his few moments of self-confrontation , Lee  
confesses:**

**Hey, do you actually  
think I can chose to live  
out in the middle of  
nowhere ?**

**Do you ? ya' think it's  
some kinda Philosophical  
! decision I took or  
something?**

**I'm living out there cause  
I can't make it here!**

**Using the brothers' reversal of roles, Shepard shows the  
irony in the appearance of success. Both Lee and Austin seem**



After kimmer leaves, the audience might expect Austin to refuse to participate in the plan. However, he grudgingly begins writing the script , but only to get his car keys back from lee. It is ironic that after several stints at the type writer, lee, who has believed that writing is an easy occupation and has ruined his brother's contract with kimmer, now realizes that the life style of a writer is not for him and prepares to return to the desert . Similarly , Austin who has argued with kimmer that he, not lee, has the necessary experience to be a successful writer, now seems to realize that he really needs to broaden his horizon to be a commercially successful writer. As the two men slowly exchange roles, Austin asks to take him back to the desert to live. While lee confesses that he needs Austin's help in delineating the fictional characters in his play, Austin soon pleads for lee's assistance in helping him escape from his artificial world.

Austin tries to persuade his brother of his survival expertise by explaining, “ I can make fires . I know how to get fresh water from condensation” (p.48). Lee, ironically , explains that Austin's theoretical experience is as useful for survival as his own practical experience:

He is troubled so little by people's feeling that he does not bother to consult with Austin before dropping the script that Austin has been working for so long. He even has the coarseness to offer Austin the job of writing the script that he Lee has developed in his head "Three hundred thousand, Austin, just for a first draft . Now you've never been offered that kind of money before" (p.34), Kimmer's lack of loyalty to Austin and Austin's sense of betrayal not only forbid him to write the script , but also begin his recording of the values represented by his vocation, his style, his life.

Austin points out the cutthroat nature of the movie business when he taunts Lee : " The pressure's on boy. This is it. You gotta' come up with it now. You don't come up with a winner on your first time out they just cut your head off. They don't give you a second chance ya'know". (p.40) .

Lee questions Austin's ability to live in the desert, "you wouldn't last a day out there". Audience who knows Shepard's own experience with screen play writing enjoys another level irony, that arises from recognizing the similarity between Austin and Shepard himself as they both struggle to find respectable acceptance for their own art instead of pandering to what the public or the critics want.

nature of human  
creativity when Lee  
usurps Austin's role as a  
screen writer. (30)

Lee and Kimmer have agreed that Austin will edit the screen play his brother dictates and put the proceeds from the sale of the manuscript into a trust fund for their father, to be administered by Lee. Tucker Orbison considers this situation as “ an hilarious comment on the state of commercialism . In the arts, especially in the film industry which is particular concern of Shepard's “ (31) Saul is concerned only with succeeding in a materialistic society , with manipulating people like bags of money . Discussing Austin's script, he tells Austin :

I am absolutely convinced  
we can get this thing off  
the ground. I mean we'll  
have to make a sale to  
television and that means  
getting a major star.  
Somebody bankable  
(p.15).



that which Austin had reached only after several months of negotiation. Although Austin is the writer in the family , it is Lee, ironically, who convinces Saul Kimmer that his screen play is “ true –to- life” , and it is Lee who really gets in touch with the harsh realities of true west. The irony is intensified in act 2, scene 6 , when Kimmer admits to Austin that he has dropped his project in favor of Lee’s . Austin can not believe that the producer has rejected his literate script for the amateur version of the West his brother Lee is presenting .

**Annette J. Saddik notes:**

In sharp contrast to Austin’s artificial cordiality ,... Lee insists upon stripping away all pretense ....Lee’s primitive force and native intuition is thus pitted against Austin’s refined manners and acquired wit... The battle between force and acquired learning develops further into an exploration of the



to help Mom and take care of her place in this scene becomes ironic later when they continue to fight rather than doing so. Their Jealousy about their parents becomes ironic later when the audience realizes that Austin does not really want to help his father financially and lee, on the other hand, attempts to steal some stuff from his mother.

The reversal of the brothers' roles is further developed in act I , scene 3 in which Austin begins negotiating with producer Saul kimmer about the script he has been working on . He gets lee out of the house by giving him the keys to his car. Lee , a petty thief, returns earlier than his promise to stay away from the house; he has brought with him a TV set he has stolen from a house in the neighborhood. Austin had told his brother to stay away because a movie producer was coming to discuss Austin's script, but the devious lee comes early only to see what mischief he can cause.

In an ironic turn of events , not only does Lee return before they finish, but he also takes command of the situation. Lee monopolizes the conversation and persists in his demands until Saul agrees first to meet him for a game of golf and then to read his idea for a “ real western” plot. It is ironic that in only a few minutes, Lee achieves a position with Kimmer superior to

unexpected arrival to his Mom's house. Austin is there to take care of Mom's houseplants while she takes a trip to Alaska. Taking advantage of the solitude and absence from his wife and children, Austin finishes the script he hopes to sell to a Hollywood producer. Although Lee does not have a home of his own to maintain, he seems insulted that he was not asked to take care of Mom's place in her absence when he notes: " she might have just as easily asked me to take care of her place as you... I mean hoe to water plants (p.7) . To make Austin realize that he has taken responsibility for his father in much the same way that Austin returned from visiting his father in the desert . When Austin tells Lee that he too has gone to visit their father, Lee responds angrily, " what d'ya , want, an award? You want some kinda'medal?" (p.7). The two brothers are rivals for father's approval / affection . They do not verbalize their trips to desert to see the father as a journey of homage, but their behavior and their imagery tell the truth. Each wants the father's blessing wholly " the father gives neither his blessing , because he is not capable of passing on a power that is only illusion" (29) Ironically , although each son has remained in close contact only with the parent he resembles more, both are jealous of the other's relationship with that parent and try to show that they have ties with both parents. The mutual desire



disdainful of the other's life-style, they are secretly envious of each other. Austin secretly long for Lee's freedom and independence; Lee openly desires Austin's comfort and security. About Austin's Ivy league education , Lee comments , " I used to picture you walk in around some campus with yer arms fulla' books . Blondes chasin after ya " (p.29) . Austin remarks that he used to think about what Lee might be doing and imagine him in " different places. Adventures. You were always on some adventure. And I used to say to myself, Lee's got the right idea. He's out there the world and I am. What am I doing ? (p.26). Each has envisioned his brother's life in a one-series of adventures rather than the lonely homeless life Lee later reveals it to be. Lee does not picture his brother studying , meeting dead lines and worrying about grades. The irony in men's unrealistic view of each other's lives is reinforced later when each brother starts to exhibit traits characteristic of the other. By the end of the play Lee has attempted on intellectual endeavor, and Austin believes he is ready for the adventure of living in the desert .

Another aspect of the rivalry which helps to bring out the irony of character is in Lee's reaction to finding Austin at his mother's home. Lee never indicates the reasons of his sudden



enactment of the playwright's personal conflict . In other words, William Kleb sees Austin and Lee as two halves of Shepard's character.

The two brothers have nothing in common. Austin symbolizes the American dream by owning a house in the suburb , having a satisfying career, and achieving sufficient financial reward for his work . Austin is neatly dressed in sweater, slacks and clean white tennis shoes. Lee looks ten years older. Balding, scruffy , he speaks with a thick western twang and looks like a bum. He wears "a filthy white –shirt, tattered brown overcoat covered with dust, dark blue baggy suit pants from the salvation Army". As the play develops, however, these contrasts become blurred, even the men's clothing becomes similar, and the end of the play, the two brothers are both exhibiting traits of both parents and of each other, leading to the audience's recognition of the irony of character.

The first impression of Lee and Austin create a sense of such dissimilarity that the two hardly seem brothers at all Austin is clean shaven , Lee has a day's growth of beard . Austin's speech is proper, clear and restrained; Lee's is foul , drunkenly slurred, and from time to time furiously uncontrolled . But ironically , while each other is openly

The second play to be discussed is True West. It was first presented at the Magic theatre in San Francisco in July, 1980. In this play, Sam Shepard uses the question of inherited family traits to bring out irony of character . Lee and Austin strive to overcome the character traits and values inherited from their parents, for their division and conflict are equally due to Lee's close association with his father and Austin's with his mother. Austin, the successful young scriptwriter, is married, has children and is financially secure. He seems to have taken his sense of responsibility from his " civilized" California neat home while she is vacationing in Alaska. She grows houseplants and keeps everything in its place, including family mementos from travels . Lee is an outlaw who prowls the desert , sleeping in abandoned cars and making a living by stealing and gambling . These traits seem to make him a chip off his father, who has left family behind, much as Shepard's owns father did.

William kleb argues for True West as Shepard's " most subjective, most personal play to date (27) " by calling attention to well known facts of the author's biography: His childhood on in a small farm in Southern California ; his literary and film successes that link Shepard with Austin. Finally the draft that Shepard has no brother convinces kleb that True West is an



realizing that he is fast being replaced by younger riders and is attempting to fit into a more conventional life for which he has no preparation. The cowboy in this play is pictured as a worn-out radio performer. Like the old man who is “ actually married to Barbara Mandrill in his mind”, Eddie is also a legend only in his own mind. Thus, the audience can recognize the irony in their traditional view of the glamorous cowboy life.

By observing the irony in May and Eddie’s treatment of each other, the audience can more fully appreciate Shepard’s theme that honesty in love relationships is difficult.

**Attilio Favorini Comments:**

Shepard’s play does not suggest that an absolute truth can be discovered for Eddie and May can never agree upon a definitive version of their past (74).

These ironies make the play more interesting because of its unpredictability.



woman and yearns for the excitement of a life elevated above everyday reality. His attachment to the countess is evidence of this desire. He may enjoy the pleasure of a woman's affection and some of the comforts home making provides but still unable to make the commitment to remain there for long. The psychological inheritance from father to son is reinforced by the camaraderie they share over the bottle of whiskey that is passed from father to son.

We learn that over the past fifteen years Eddie and May have been separated and reunited many times, each time playing out the same scene of violence and confusion. May reminds Eddie that he has always disappeared:

“Suckered me into some dumb little fantasy and then dropped me like a hot rock. How many times has that happened “ (p.25). It is true that Eddie is trying to face the reality of being an aging cowboy with the idea of settling down to ranching, which is a traditional way of ending a life on the road for a cowboy, but May can not accept his view because of his past failures at putting down roots . Further , reality of Eddie's current life as a rodeo rider dispels whatever glamorous notion the audience held of the dazzling cowboy at work in the ring. Instead, we see an aging cowboy trying to hold onto his Job but



personality (47). This theme is illustrated by the countess's attack on his truck and horse. When she first comes to the motel parking lot in her black Mercedes, she shoots not into the motel room where Eddie is visiting May but instead shoots out the windshield of Eddie's truck. Later, when the countess returns, she sets his truck on fire and allows his livestock to escape. ( instead of attacking him personally) , she has shot his horse out from under him. It is ironic that she avenges his desertion of her not by killing him but by destroying part of his image of himself. Further, because of Eddie's manly view of himself, it is also ironic that his defeat comes at the hands of a woman.

Even May tends to perceive Eddie's cowboy image as his real personality. Although he promises May that he is ready to leave the rodeo circuit and to settle down, she does not believe him. He is explaining his future plans to May: he is going to move his trailer to a land he owns in Wyoming, which is a typical cowboy country, and have some horses and chickens . May rejects his plans saying, " you keep comin' up here with this lame country dream life with chickens and vegetables and I can't stand any of it . It makes me puke to even think about it". (p.25). Eddie , like his father, is unable to remain faithful to one

**“Wyoming” as signifier of  
the wild west, authenticity  
“ masculinity”, and the  
unalienated has been  
transformed into a vehicle  
for mass marketing mass  
consumption. (46)**

**Eddie’s words explain how “Wyoming” represents the bucolic vision of America: “ May , I got everything worked out.. I’m goanna move the trailer. Build a little pipe corral to keep the horses . Have a big vegetable garden. Some chickens may be” (p.23). In the lines which follow, May proceeds to interrogate Eddie’s bucolic vision: Wyoming? Are you crazy? I’m not moving to Wyoming . What’s up there? Marlboro men? (p.23). Further, Eddie’s worn out clothes and comments about his competition suggest that promoters exploit the modern day cowboy by using for profit and entertainment until he has outlived his usefulness; then he is discarded .**

**As a twentieth-century cowboy, Eddie relies on both horse and horsepower; both are important to his image because they give him mobility. Susan Abbotson sees that Eddie’s image may be more real to the characters than is his actual**

like “ spider monkeys” (pp.34), roping chairs and drafting them across the room (p.35), and putting his spurs on to impress Martin (p.36). Through his action, Eddie at first reinforces the popular idea of cowboys as manly , strong, and well-coordinated. Ironically , however, although Eddie has promised to beat up Martin, the first thing Martin does when he bursts through the door because he thinks May is in danger is to knock Eddie to the floor.

**Johan Callens notes:**

Eddie is the “ authentic”  
Hollywood cowboy come  
to rescue his “ gal” from  
the cheap motel room...  
Eddie is, fundamentally,  
an anachronism. As  
borne rider, Eddie is the  
wild cowboy domesticated  
for the rodeo circuit,  
another form of show  
biz.. Here we have one  
myth appropriated and  
commodified by another;

does not know where May will go, but it is obvious that she does not expect Eddie to take her with him and that she does not plan to follow him. The title of the play echoes and justifies the Characters' action. The final scene of the play, when Eddie has abandoned May and the old man stares at the imaginary picture of his beloved, raises a question : who is the fool for love? All the characters seem to fool themselves about love and be willing to fool each other. Further, the ambiguity of the play's end suggests that this will not be the last encounter between May and Eddie. One round has come to an end; another will begin.

Eddie's habit of coming in and out of May's life is characteristic of his occupation. As a rodeo stunt rider, he is one of the last cowboys and proud of his image. For example, while he and May talk, he rubs resin into his bucking glove. When he learns about Martin, he immediately begins threatening him and calling him " twerp" . May remarks, " Any body who doesn't half kill themselves falling of horses or Jumping on streets is a " That's right". Later, Eddie reinforces his macho image by cleaning his shotgun(p.31), roping the bedpost for practice because he wants to keep up with the younger guys who can rope a calf in six seconds and jump off

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**Eddie: But now you're  
doubting it  
because she says  
it's a lie?  
... she suggests it's  
a lie to  
you and all of a  
sudden you  
change your mind?  
Is that is it?  
You go from true to  
false like  
that , in a second?  
(p.51).**

Another ironic role reversal occurs, when Eddie's supposed rival, Martin, turns up after many threats of violence and revenge " I'm goanna nail his ass to the floor. Directly" (p.41). Eddie proceeds to explain to Martin the " real" reason why lovers go to the movies.

The ambiguity of the end of the play further reinforces the irony inherent in the characters' views of their relationships. When Eddie leaves for just a moment to check on the damage to his truck, May starts to pack. Martin is convinced that she is preparing to leave with Eddie, but when he suggests that course of action, she replied that Eddie is already gone. When Martin says "He said he'd be back in a second". May responds, He's gone" (p.56). Again, the audience

they fell in love, still unaware of the truth of their heritage. The old man rejects both versions of the story and asks Eddie to relate the true story, but Eddie corroborates May's story and adds the detail that his mother used a shotgun to perform the act. By the end of the scene, even the audience can not be sure of the truth. The father further confuses the facts by denying both stories and insinuating that he might not have fathered both children. As Don B. Wilmeth comments it is not definite whether the action confirms that the old Man is May's and Eddie's imaginative creation or whether the play is the old Man's memory fabrication. (45).

Martin, the only on- stage audience for the story, is not sure what to think either. After Eddie tells his version, May denies it: "None of it's true , Martin. He's had this weird sick ideas for years now and it's totally made up" (p.51). When Martin suggests that it might be better if he left, Eddie refuses to let him:-

**Eddie:** Did you think that  
was a  
story, Martin?  
Did you think I  
made that whole  
thing up?

**Martin:** No. I mean, at  
the time you  
Were telling it, it  
seemed real.

According to Shepard's stage direction, he exists "only in the minds of May and Eddie" even though they might talk to him .

Although the old man claims not to recognize the two characters, he is unquestionably the father of both of them. Eddie's and May's psychological confusion seems to be the result of the past action of the father. Eddie and May offer their own version of the past. Their father led two different lives with two wives in separate towns and had one child with each of them. Eddie and May were the offspring of his divided love, living with separate mothers, never suspecting each other's existence . He would disappear for months and each wife would gratefully receive him upon his return without questioning his absence. Finally, however, May's mother decided to trace her wandering husband and found him in the small town where he lived with Eddie's mother. While May's mother became very withdrawn, almost like someone who had died, Eddie's mother actually committed suicide.

In Eddie's version, his father silently led him on a long walk to the door of the house where May lived with her mother. Eddie saw his half-sister May peering from behind the dress of the red haired woman who opened the door and threw herself sobbing into the arms of her long absent husband . Instantly

jealous of Martin. He keeps reminding May that they are “connected”.

**May disagrees:**

**May: Nothing was decided!**

**You made**

**all that up.**

**Eddie: You know what happened.**

**May : You promised me.**

**You can't start that up all**

**over again .You promised**

**me .**

**Eddie: A promise can't stop**

**something like that.**

**It happened (p.31).**

As Eddie has earlier suggested, May introduces him to Martin as her cousin. Although the audience recognizes the dramatic irony in this because they believe Eddie to be her former lover, they are in for a surprise. As soon as May has made the introduction, Eddie explains that she is lying . Eventually, he reveals that they are half brother and sister, have known each other since high school, and “fooled around” before they were made aware of their blood kinship”. The appearance of the old Man complicates the discussion .





leave, but she asks him to wait. The following stage directions underscore the ambiguity of their relationship :

**He closes down. They stand there facing each other for a while. She crosses slowly to him. She stops . He takes a few steps towards her, stops. They both move closer, stop. Pause as they look to each other. They embrace... she pulls away from him slightly. Smiles She looks him straight in the eye, then suddenly knees him in the groin with tremendous force. Eddie doubles over and drops like a rock. She stands over him” (p.26).**

Her physical violence against Eddie presents an ironic contrast to the earlier hug. While May further explains that she hates Eddie because he is having an affair with a woman identified as the countess . Ironically , May has also been seeing someone named Martin and is getting ready to go out on a date with him. After May tells Eddie that her dates are none of his business, he goes out to the truck . During his absence she begins packing a suitcase. She hurriedly stuffs it- under the bed when she hears him returning . We are not sure if she is packing to go away with Eddie or to get away from Eddie as their conversation continues, it is clear however, that Eddie is

scream” “ Don’t go!!!” (p.22). At the point , Shepard’s stage directions describe May doing the following: “ she takes pillow, clutches it to her chest, then throws herself force down to bed, moaning and moving from one end of bed to the other on her elbows and knees”. When she fears Eddie returning , however, she “ leaps of bed clutching pillow, stands upstage right of bed, facing stage-left door” (p.22). This behavior has two effects on the audience ; she exhibits both attraction to Eddie and rejection of him for his infidelity with the “ countess”.

Second, it sets up the irony of situation of the following sequence, in which May, who has been upset when Eddie leaves , now announces that she plans to kill both Eddie and the countess, after torturing the countess first. Eddie seems to ignore her outburst and keeps reminding her how far he has driven to see her and how much he has missed her. While he insists that he is taking her back, she resists, reminding him that he has “ suckered (her) into some dumb little fantasy and then dropped) like a hot rock” many times before. (p.25). He disagrees maintaining that she ran off from him. He is also sure that she will want him back that Eddie starts to go out to his truck to bring in his suitcase so that he can spend the night, But May asks “ Are you kidding” (p.26) Again , Eddie starts to

May , his sometime lover, is currently working as a waitress ; she has taken whatever work she can get while running from Eddie.

Much of the irony in Fool For Lover results from the discrepancies or the different revisions of the stories of Eddie, May, and the “ Old Man” concerning their family relationships, the contrast between the way May speaks about Eddie when he is there and when he is not; the difference between the cowboy bravado of Eddie and his actual weakness : and the disparity between what these characters do.

Irony of character results when the audience sees the discrepancy between what Eddie and May say about their relationship and how they act toward each other. This contrast is remarkable in the first scene in which Eddie reassures May that he is not leaving . He “ gets up slowly, goes cautiously to her, strokes her head softly”, she suddenly “ grabs his other leg and holds on tight to both, then pushes him away and returns to her original position “ and, finally, leaps of the bed and lashes out at him with her fists”(p.21). an action in obvious contrast to the earlier affectionate . When May insists that she does not need Eddie, he turns to leave. Then she asks him to stay, but he leaves anyway. Once the door slams, she gives an “agonized

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*Issues which are particularly charged include religion, love, morality, politics and history. The ironic effects of Shepard's plays depend not just on individual ironic characterizations or situations but on the audience's apprehension of the popular beliefs of American culture. Three of these popular beliefs which are frequent subjects in Shepard's plays are the value of the American family, the glamour of the entertainment industry, and the idealization of West.*

Curse of the starving class (1977) and Buried child (1978), along with True West (1980) and A lie of the Mind (1986) have come to be known as Shepard's family plays and have received much critical attention. As Garrett Eisler observes, "From O'Neill on, our serious playwrights have been obsessed with the failure of family harmony and with family disintegration"(11)

The irony in Fool For Love results from irony of character, irony of situation and dramatic irony. First presented at the Magic Theater in San Francisco on February 8 1983, this play deals with a stormy relationship between Eddie and May. In a tiny , bleak motel room on the edge of the Mojave Desert , Eddie and May rehash the worn-out differences of their 15 year romance. Eddie is a rodeo cowboy .



Shepard's plays include all the types of irony described by these authors: his characters say certain things while obviously meaning something else (verbal irony); some characters act one way but reveal themselves to have hidden motives (irony of character); the expected outcomes of certain conflicts do not occur (irony of situation); and often the audience is privy to information certain characters do not know (dramatic irony). All these facets contribute to the audience's enjoyment of the plays and help to embody Shepard's themes. As Charles I. Glicksberg notes:

All forms of irony.. contribute their burden of meaning of the total ironic effect ... In modern works irony is frequently expressed not just in style but in the treatment of the subject matter, which harps on and indeed magnifies the incongruities of existence. (9)

*One critic suggests that the appreciation the audience has for irony depends on the amount of emotional capital the reader or observer has invested in the victim or the topic of the irony. (10)*

The other forms of irony such as irony of character, irony of situation and verbal irony are often directly or indirectly related to dramatic irony in that the audience's recognition of the disparity between appearance and reality may result from their hearing or seeing something that at least some of the characters cannot or do not see. Irony of character occurs when a character's superficial appearance is later revealed to be different from his or her real nature. Irony of situation occurs when the audience's expectations about the play's outcome or conclusion are not met. As Muecke notes, "The wider the disparity, the greater the irony"(6). Verbal irony refers to the difference between what is said and what is meant.

One of the significant aspects of irony is that to recognize it requires mental involvement on the part of the audience. Candace D. Lang calls this process "interpretation" or "translation"(7). While Wayne C. Booth terms it "reconstruction" (8). Whatever the word used to describe the process of perceiving the true meaning beneath the surface, it is an activity which gives the audience a sense of accomplishment when it understands the author's ironic intent.

audience takes part in all the action of the play, the characters themselves generally do not” (4) Muecke further explains that irony in the theater depends in large part on the blindness of some or all of the characters. The characters may be literally or metaphorically blind whether willfully or accidentally to the machinations of the villain, the wiles of the hero, the workings of fate, their identities, their own natures or motives.

Another critic subdivides dramatic irony to include the following: -

- 1- The play within a play, which produces ironies by projecting through a veil of Pretense the deeper meaning and intentions of the characters
  - 2- The situation where one or more characters who are conscious of the ironies produce by ironic words...which mean a sense of cross purposes, and
  - 3- The situation where all the characters are unconscious of the irony which the audience perceives.
- (5)

**One level of irony is aptly described by some critics who observe that: -**

**The very fact that an actor is impersonating a character provides a certain depth of irony; for the actor is in the ironic situation of being and not being himself and the character he is playing while the audience is in the ironic attitude of detached observation of life and acting. (1)**

*Another level of irony is that termed “dramatic irony”. Dramatic irony may be defined as both “The device and the feeling produced when the audience is, “ Let it on something in the stage situation of which one or more of the characters are not yet aware”(2)*

**Dramatic irony, then, “Consists in preparing the audience for the ironic situation by letting them in on something not all the characters know” (3). The audience almost always has more knowledge than any one character does because “while the**



Critics have focused on several aspects of Shepard's work, but most discuss a limited number of plays with respect to any particular topic. Because of Shepard's talent as a composer and as a musician, a number of analyses have explored the use of music in his plays, other writers have examined Shepard's use of the language of popular culture, especially that of rock stars, street gangs, show business, emphasizing the playwright's distinctively American "Voice" Much has been written about Shepard's themes, especially that of the disintegration of American Family.

One aspect of Shepard's work, which has received little notice, however, is his use of irony. For that reason, this study will examine Shepard's use of irony in three of his plays; "Fool for love" (1983), "True West" (1980)

Irony is a concept which has fascinated audiences and critics for centuries and has been the subject of numerous studies. Those who studied irony used different terminology, but they agreed that irony involves the reader's or audience's recognition of the disparity between appearance and reality. They also concur that the very nature of theatre encourages several levels of irony.


**Introduction :**

Sam Shepard is known as one of the most accomplished playwrights in the United States, he also gained celebrity as an actor in a couple of American movies. He has written more than 45 plays, different screenplays, and has received 11 Obie Awards, besides a Golden Palm Award and an Oscar nomination. For several years Sam Shepard has been acknowledged as the most talented and promising playwright to emerge from Off- off Broadway movement. He is increasingly recognized as one of the most significant dramatists in the English- speaking world. Praised by Edward Albee, he has been called, " one of the three or four most gifted playwrights alive" and " the most talented of his generation". ( Graham 12 )

Sam Shepard draws much of his material from popular cultural sources such as horror films, popular folklore, country and rock music and murder- mysteries. In his best work he transforms the original stereotyped characters and situations into an imaginative, linguistically brilliant, quasi- surrealistic chemistry of text and stage presentation which is original and authentically his own.



**Sam Shepard as an Ironist**  
**A Study in Dramatic Technique**

**By** 

**Dr. Sahar Adel Mohamed Bahgat**  
**Faculty of Arts,**  
**El-Minya University**