

T.C

Istanbul University

Institute of Social Sciences

Western Languages and Literatures

American Culture and Literature

Master's Thesis

**Psychoanalytic Approach to the Dysfunctional Families and
Alienated Individuals in Sam Shepard's Plays**

Beste SAĞLAM

2501171364

Advisor

Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Yasemin Güniz SERTEL

İstanbul, 2021

ABSTRACT

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES AND ALIENATED INDIVIDUALS IN SAM SHEPARD'S PLAYS

BESTE SAĞLAM

In this thesis, Sam Shepard's family plays, namely **Curse of the Starving Class**, **Buried Child**, **True West**, and **Fool for Love** are analysed according to Freud's psychoanalysis theory. My hypothesis is that the Father Complex in these plays leads to dysfunctional families that experience Oedipus Complex, Uncanny occurrences, Castration Anxiety which entail violence and incest. The relationship between the sons and fathers is going to be the main focus as Sigmund Freud puts emphasis on how father-son relationship shapes individuals' identities. Sam Shepard's characters are in the quest for identity but find themselves entrapped by their father's curse. With the unconscious urge of repetition compulsion, the characters, especially sons act-out their traumas on stage. Through their actions and dialogue, their repressed past comes to light. The effects of these traumas on families are going to be analyzed with Freudian psychoanalytical terms in depth.

Keywords: Sam Shepard, Psychoanalysis, Trauma, Oedipus Complex, Repetition Compulsion

ÖZ

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES AND ALIENATED INDIVIDUALS IN SAM SHEPARD'S PLAYS

BESTE SAĞLAM

Bu tezde, Sam Shepard'ın aile oyunları olan **Curse of the Starving Class**, **Buried Child**, **True West** ve **Fool for Love**, Freud'un psikanaliz kuramı doğrultusunda incelenmektedir. Tezin argümanı, oyunlardaki Baba Kompleksi'nin, şiddet ve ensesti de beraberinde getiren Oidipus Kompleksi, Tekinsizlik, Kastrasyon Kaygısı yaşayan işlevsiz ailelere yol açtığıdır. Sigmund Freud'un psikanaliz teorisinde baba-oğul ilişkisinin bireylerin kimliklerini nasıl şekillendirdiği ve baba-oğul çatışması tezin ana odak noktası olacaktır. Sam Shepard'ın karakterleri kimlik arayışı içindedir ancak kendilerini babalarının miras olarak aktarılan lanetinin tuzağına düşmüş bulurlar. Karakterler, özellikle de oğullar, bilinçsiz bir yineleme zorlantısı dürtüsüyle travmalarını sahnede canlandırırlar. Eylemleri ve diyalogları sayesinde bastırılmış geçmişleri gün yüzüne çıkar. Bu travmaların aileler ve bireyler üzerindeki etkileri Freudyen psikanalitik terimlerle derinlemesine analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sam Shepard, Psikanaliz, Travma, Oidipus Kompleksi, Yineleme Zorlantısı

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Assistant Professor Yasemin Güniz Sertel for the continuous support of my study and research, for her patience and motivation. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Özden for her support and encouragement. In addition, I would like to thank my thesis committee member Assistant Professor İrfan Cenk Yay for his insightful comments and valuable feedback for my thesis.

My sincere thanks and gratitude go to my parents Meral Yıkanmışlar and Serdar Yıkanmışlar who have always supported me at every stage of my life. Also I am grateful to my beloved husband, Barış whose endless support helped me complete this thesis more easily. I also thank Umut Sağlam, Ahu Sağlam and Salih Sağlam for their valuable support.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my dear friends, Berna Erden, Pelin Savtak, Nehir Mavioğlu, Didar Karadağ for their companionship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ÖZ.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS	12
1.1 Fallen Father and Wanton Son	21
1.2 Conscious and Unconscious.....	26
1.3 Uncanny	29
1.4 Heredity and Curse	33
CHAPTER TWO: BURIED CHILD	34
2.1 Fallen Father Figure and Oedipus Complex.....	39
2.2 Heredity.....	43
2.3 Uncanny.....	45
2.4 Repudiation and Obsession of the Past.....	49
CHAPTER THREE: TRUE WEST	53
3.1 The Absent Father.....	62
3.2 Rivalry.....	65
3.3 Doppelgänger and Dichotomy.....	69
3.4 Heredity.....	72
CHAPTER FOUR	70
4.1 Repetition Compulsion And Trauma.....	76
4.2 Heredity.....	80

4.3 Incest/ Super-Ego.....	83
4.4 Uncanny.....	84
CONCLUSION.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	89



INTRODUCTION

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND DRAMA

Literature and psychoanalysis complete each other as both are in endeavor to conceive the person and find meaning as to his actions, thoughts, desires, grief; in other words, his way of existence. The roots of the drama genre date back to Ancient Greece where tragedy appeared as a form of theatre which served a purpose to enable the people to share the same emotions together. Aristotle defines tragedy in *Poetics* as; “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions” (8). The fact that “purgation” or “katharsis” is the prominent element of tragedy draws a parallel between psychoanalysis and drama. Freud describes the method of hypnosis used by Breuer in his *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena* as cathartic with these words: “the forgotten memory has been acting like a foreign body in the mind, with the removal of which the irritating phenomena cease. This discovery, first made by Breuer in 1881, can be made the basis of therapy of hysterical phenomena which deserves to be described as ‘cathartic’” (Freud, 1877-1897: 443). In hypnosis, a person faces his own unfamiliarized and suppressed self. Freud says hypnosis is the only way to reach the unconscious, and it is not possible to reach it as easily as preconscious.

Expressing feelings lies at the heart of literature, and a text exists as long as there is a reader who is intertwined with it while interpreting. Likewise, psychoanalysis is like a literature text, especially the one which is similar to the drama being performed on the stage and requires the interaction of both the characters on stage and the audience interpreting it. “For Freud, it is not enough for the patient to talk, but there should also be a strong transference, a drama taking place between the analyst and the analysand, whose primary purpose is to help the patient to reproduce and work through the repressed traumatic memories” (Güzel 4). Likewise, drama requires the audience to delve deeper into the characters on stage in

order to understand the hidden motives behind their gestures and speech. In the drama genre, the characters disclose their inner worlds as much as they represent themselves through their own dialogue and actions, which means that there is no narrator to display, so the audience or the reader needs to analyze the characters' actions. The reader is in the shoes of the analyst, while the characters on the stage are in the ones of the analysand as if they were in a hypnosis session. Characters in a drama and the analysand in a hypnosis session both share the position of being under control and having no authority over their own actions. The former one's fate is decided by the author who creates the identity and is conscious of the outcomes of that characteristic which is similar to the case of the analysand who is under the effect of hypnosis, not conscious, and not able to control his thoughts as they are directed by the analyst. In this situation, the ones who are going to be surprised are the reader/audience and the analyst because they cannot predict the consequences, but they can come to the point of apprehension simultaneously with the people they observe.

Sam Shepard's writing period, the 20th century, coincides with The Realism movement in American drama when the lives of the ordinary people appeared in texts which manage the struggles of everyday life rather than imaginary tales or myths. The characters' problems or traumas are familiar, the setting is no different than the real places, there is no *deus ex machina* to solve all the problems immediately as there was in Greek Theatre. The time flow is linear therefore, the realist drama is quite different from Aristotle's definition of tragedy in which the use of language is ornamental while the dialogues are natural in the realist drama. On the other hand, what is common in both are the skilfully created characters in depth. The time's being linear in the play requires the absence of flashback. There is just present time which can be conveyed through dialogue. Lyons reveals how the disclosure of the past is enabled at the time of present in the realist plays with these words:

Within the brief period of time that could be played out plausibly within these mundane spaces, the dialogue had to reveal the impact of the past upon the

present. Consequently, the revelation of the past, which has presence only as the material of language, became the actual stuff of dialogue. To make the required narrative recitation dramatically active as dialogue, conversation must reveal information that has been previously suppressed in a revelation that irredeemably alters the present circumstance. (Lyons, 2014: 119)

The past in drama reoccurs with the words, which is similar to hypnosis when the patient reveals his repressed past with his gestures or unconscious speech. The exposure of the past has mostly such a paramount effect that it thoroughly alters the flow of the plot as much as it does the patient's life just after the hypnosis.

In Sam Shepard's Family plays, there are traumatized families and the family members who are victims either in a struggle to escape their traumatic past or having been trapped inside the whirl of the jumble which was created by others. The conflicts, which trigger family trauma arise between fathers and sons as consequences of rivalry for dominance and sons' struggle to create a new self by discarding dependence on his father. Therefore, there are sons who are restricted in their families' especially their fathers' boundaries in a quest of identity by trying to disentangle from his heredity which had already given them the roles they need to play throughout their lives.

The question of identity and its hereditary nature was raised in the trilogy by Wesley's transformation in *Curse [of the Starving Class]* and by Vince's assumption of his Grandfather's spirit in **Buried Child**. In **True West** the dependence on heredity is not as graphically illustrated as it is in the other plays - the father of the brothers is never presented on stage- but this in no way diminishes the menacing power of his presence. (Watt 124)

Heredity is indeed the curse which surrounds the families.

Shepard calls this curse "nitroglycerine of the blood" (in the words of Emma in the first act of **Curse of the Starving Class**). It flows through the sons' veins and through the fathers'. It imposes its will even when they do everything they can to stop it. It turns them against each other and locks them in battle, clinging to each other for life, yet fighting to the death [...] frequently recurring aspect of the father-son relationship is the father's notion that his offspring is a pale, weak version of himself. (Abbot 195)

The issue of heredity and curse is highlighted in all the plays manifesting that the traumas inevitably influence and shatter all the family because the past, however, suppressed it is, continues to pursue and disturb the next generation. According to Michael Diamond, "fathers play a unique role in thereby helping their children to stabilize the basic ego functions including reality testing, affect modulation, mood and impulse regulation, delineation of self from other, and focused concentration" (11), and if there is no decent father figure, the child cannot create his own identity but keeps on living with the characteristic that is formed by his ancestors. Freud denotes that a son needs to cease living under the shadow of his father; otherwise, the rivalry between them will be inevitable.

The characteristic of a child is closely related to his way of relationship which he establishes with the family members at each psychosexual stage. Freud notes that every developmental stage plays a crucial role in the development of the child. These stages are especially important for the sons as they are at once the integral part of the opposite sex, the mother. In the separation process, the father's role is highly important to prevent the later traumas which the child can experience throughout his whole life. Freud explains the dyadic and triadic relationship of the child and the parents in *The Ego and the Id*:

At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis of his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the earliest instance of an object choice on the anaclitic model; his father the boy deals with by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships exist side by side, until the sexual wishes in regard to the mother become more intense and the father is perceived as an obstacle to them; this gives rise to the Oedipus complex. (23)

If the boy cannot succeed identification with his father, he keeps perceiving his father as an opponent. The boy's identification with the father is essential in terms of preventing the "Oedipus Complex" as it is the turning point for the child to give an end to the hostile feelings towards his father and stop thinking about taking his place.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud illustrates the way the mind works with the structural model of personality consisting of the id, ego, and superego. Each of them serves a purpose in the psyche and affects our decisions either consciously or unconsciously. While analyzing the characters, however difficult it is to understand thoroughly, it is essential to comprehend whether their actions are conscious or unconscious. He denotes that the id works unconsciously with the pleasure principle and primitive instincts, while the ego controls it. "The ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions" (15). The ego itself, includes conscious and unconscious parts. According to Freud, the id represents our internal world, while the ego represents our external world. Also, there is "a differentiating grade within the ego, which may be called the ego-ideal or super-ego" (19). What distinguishes an adult's psyche from a child's is his developed superego and ego, in other words, his ability to adapt to the moral framework of a society. In the beginning, a child only lives to satisfy his id, but during the anal stage, his ego develops, and then at the phallic stage his superego.

Sigmund Freud's structural model of personality defines the superego as a punishment mechanism that is ruled by parents and societal standards. Freud mentions the tribes' ethical rules of incest in *Totem and Taboo*; "in almost every place where we find totems, we also find a law against persons of the same totem having sexual relations with one another and consequently against their marrying. This, then, is 'exogamy', an institution related to totemism" (4). This demonstrates that incest has always been forbidden by society, and they have severe punishments as death. As regards to society's principle of behavior, an individual's superego takes the role of deciding the immorality of incest and preventing it. According to James A. Godley, the Oedipus complex is the id's archaic inheritance (16), which occurs by the incitation of primitive desires when the individual does not contemplate the ethical values of society, and this comprehension of values is only possible by the development of the superego. The Superego functions as the conscience which parents bring as much as the society. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud describes the relation of the father with superego, or ego-ideal, and its effects on the Oedipus Complex as follows:

[The] double aspect of the ego-ideal derives from the fact that the ego-ideal had the task of effecting the repression of the Oedipus complex, indeed, it is to that revolutionary event that it owes its existence. Clearly the repression of the Oedipus complex was no easy task. The parents, and especially the father, were perceived as the obstacle to realization of the Oedipus wishes; so the child's ego brought in a reinforcement to help in carrying out the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself. The strength to do this was, so to speak, borrowed from the father, and this loan was an extraordinarily momentous act. The superego retains the character of the father, while the more intense the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of discipline, religious teaching, schooling and reading) the more exacting later on is the domination of the super-ego over the ego -- in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt. (26)

The Superego emerges as the child grows, and the Oedipus Complex being a “neurosis [which is] the result of a conflict between the ego and its id” (“General Psychology Theory” 185) is resolved thanks to the superego of an individual; which means the appearance of the superego and the termination of the Oedipus Complex happens at the same time. Thanks to the superego, an individual feels compelled to behave according to society's rules most of which condemn incestuous relationships. Freud says that:

Analytic observation enables us to recognize or guess these connections between the phallic organization, the Oedipus complex, the threat of castration, the formation of the super-ego, and the latency period. These connections justify the statement that the destruction of the Oedipus complex is brought about by the threat of castration. (Freud, 1924: 4089)

The fear of losing masculine power for a boy is the most deterrent factor to prevent Oedipus complex; in addition, this punishment is thought to be given by the father who is the rival of the boy. The boy perceives this emasculation by his father as humiliation and realizes that as a consequence of this punishment he can never take place of his father, so he renounces his passion.

The rivalry between the father and son which emerges at the phallic stage along with Oedipus Complex is possibly resolved by the boy's identification with the father. figure. “In the case of the male child, identifying with the father requires an affiliation with a revered yet deeply resented figure. Indeed, the boy's initial hostility toward his rival is necessarily mixed with feelings of admiration and love in order that he positively identifies with the father and internalizes his authority” (Freeman 121). The boy accepts that his father is not his rival and that he himself is also a part

of his father as much as his mother. The anxiety of the dyadic relationship between the mother and the son being under threat ends with the acceptance of the triadic relationship. However, if the Oedipus Complex or the perception of the father as a rival is just repressed but not successfully resolved at the right stage, then it leads to neurosis in the later stages of the child's development which is called "infantile neurosis". As Freud notes in his article "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" in 1924; "if the ego has in fact not achieved much more than a *repression* of the complex, the latter persists in an unconscious state in the id and will later manifest its pathogenic effect" (4089). Therefore, a successful relationship within the family depends on the respective psychological development of individuals; otherwise, the characters who repressed the traumas they experienced in the past and the inevitable reflection of this repression on their unconscious behavior are observed.

In Sam Shepard's Family quartet, the underlying reason which mostly causes the dysfunctional families is the 'Father Complex' which is described by Freud as "the ambivalent relationship to the father" (Freud, 1913: 2781). The absence of a strong father figure results in the ambiguity of authority among the men in the family. As a result of this ambiguity, the sons are in a competition to lead. They are in a battle either with their brothers or their fathers for sovereignty. In **Curse of the Starving Class**, Wesley feels a need to take the place of his irresponsible father in order to be able to take care of his mother and sister. Someone needs to take the lead because of the power vacuum which jeopardizes the privacy of the family. Wesley's effort to create his own identity is observed throughout the play. However, he cannot leave his father's inheritance of arrogant characteristics aside altogether and ends up appearing in his father's clothes which means he becomes no more than his father's reflection in the end. In **Buried Child**, the reason for the antagonism which the brothers feel towards each other and towards their father is Dodge's immobility. His perpetual position on the couch hinders him from dominating his children and wife. Likewise, Weston is superseded by his son Wesley. It is symbolized by Wesley's building a new door that his father had broken as well as his showing up in his father's clothes. Likewise, the fact that Dodge's ascendancy is gained by Tilden is shown through his incestuous relationship with his

mother and his growing crops in the backyard which Dodge cannot succeed to do. In **True West**, the car keys swinging between the two brothers, Austin and Lee, become the symbol of two men's wavering power in the family. Lee is the wanton son figure with his struggle to be associated with a place or something. His identity construction navigates between his productive brother Austin and his desultory father. Despite their carving out a new identity, both Austin and Lee, either at the beginning or at the end, follow the path of their fathers in the desert. Similarly, Eddie in **Fool for Love** cannot become an independent figure as his father controls his actions throughout the play. He is in a constant battle with his ghost-like father while he is making his decisions because The Old Father interrupts his son's actions telling him what to do.

In the quartet, characters experience peculiar events which actually are meaningful to those characters as all of them are related to their psyche, memories, and traumas. Fred describes these kinds of events as “uncanny” and explains details of the term in his article *Das Unheimliche* or *The Uncanny* in English. It is defined as the familiarized familiar which though strange at first, then becomes familiar. Also, it is frightening as Freud expressed in his article: “‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar” (Freud, 1919: 3676). Freud denotes in the article that “man's attitude to death, involuntary repetition, and the castration complex comprise practically all the factors which turn something frightening into something uncanny” (Freud, 1919: 3693) because all of them are as the result of traumas which was not resolved but repressed. So to say, they are not forgotten completely, so once they were familiar. Because of their might to evince the past traumas which are defamiliarized and suppressed, these experiences are frightening for individuals. When someone experiences them, he finds his experience unfamiliar as he is alienated from his past.

As one of the phenomena of uncanny events in Sam Shepard's Family plays, the repetition compulsion is observed in most of the characters who suppressed their traumas which have still been lingering in their present lives. Therefore, just like a psychoanalyst who tries to go deeper under the layer of consciousness, the audience or the reader is able to correlate the characters'

unconscious actions on stage with their psyche, and it is possible to define this situation by Freud's term "acting out". This term explains the situation when "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud, 1914: 2501). The aspect of repetition is emphasized in **Fool for Love** as the incidents in the play keep running around in circles. Also, a cycle of repetition is observed which demonstrates its effect throughout the generations, especially on the fathers and son, thereby explaining the reason why sons reflect the same characteristics, which have once a traumatic effect on themselves.

Another uncanny aspect is that the characters have a "doppelgänger" or double in the plays. Some characters are inevitably entwined with another character inside the play creating each other's double sides. In **True West**, the brothers are like yin and yang since they complete each other's deficiencies and extremities which creates balance in the family. On the other hand, in **Buried Child** and **Curse of the Starving Class**, the notion of doppelgänger looms in an uncannier way such as a reflection of the self on a mirror, or resuscitation. Freud mentions the theory of double in his article "The 'Uncanny'" as follows:

we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another- by what we should call telepathy-, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing- the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (3686)

The confusion of the self, which Freud mentions, is observed in Weston, Wesley, and Vince as they all encounter their repressed and unfamiliar selves. In **Curse of the Starving Class** Act Three, Weston discovers a new self who is like a stranger to him. Like Weston, Wesley begins to feel himself more as a part of his father when he wears his father's clothes. Vince's return to his family's house in expectation of feeling a sense of belonging after a long period of detachment culminates in more alienation rather than belonging when no one recognizes him. He faces another Vince whose existence is denied with the buried child in the backyard of the house. Repressing the shame of incest is the only way for the family to survive. The family can endure thanks to the absence of Vince and his shame. The fact that Vince's return brings to light the uncanny atmosphere in the house by reminding the repressed familiar might be an indication that the buried child which comes out at the end of the play in Tilden's arms is Vince's doppelgänger.

In the following chapters, the characters of Sam Shepard's Family quartet are going to be analyzed in depth according to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach. Psychoanalytic theory will help comprehend how characters' conscious acts among society are influenced by their repressed traumas in addition to their unconscious and preconscious. The reflections of the uncanny including the case of doppelgänger, repetition compulsion, Oedipus complex, castration anxiety, and father complex are going to be analyzed.

CHAPTER ONE

CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS

The play's premiere was in April 1977 making it the first play of the family trilogy. It was written in post-world war II. The time and the setting of the play are approximately the same period when Americans gave more importance to their family unity. By leaving the wars behind, the country's policy started to give precedence to the family unit to inspire hope and welfare. There were campaigns and commercials to invigorate the family life to heal the wounds of war. The correlation between "family well-being and survival of democracy" (DeLuzio 125) was fundamental during the Cold War period for the good of the country. The ideal nuclear family necessitates the commitment of every family member to unity. Therefore, all the family members are attributed certain roles in an ideal American family. "[...] World War II inspired an idealization of the white, native-born nuclear family. That family form featured the husband as patriarch and breadwinner, wife as nurturing mother, and several young children at home" (Prescott 129). Instead of an absent father figure in the war period, post-war required men to take the responsibility of the home care and children. However, in this play, there is not a stereotypical American family who is expected to live in prosperity and harmony; on the contrary, there is a disintegrated family whose members dream of leaving America. The father cannot provide his patriarchal role as a breadwinner. One symbol of failure to live the American Dream is the empty fridge which exposes the incompetence of the father in the play. The family members' desires are more individualistic than unifying, and it does not meet the expectations of an ideal family. In other words, the other side of the coin of the so-called ideal American family life, which is in fact a disillusionment, appears. "Father and son, mother and daughter address one another, but their actions suggest that they exist in their own parallel worlds. The characters live according to their own agendas. They are insular and isolated figures. Each plays a tragic part in the decay of this family. Family life, in this play, is filled with violence and repressed desires" (Roudané, 2000: 348). The

dysfunctional Tate family struggle for food and meaning in their lives. The father figure Weston is an alcoholic, and his wife Ella has already lost her connection with home. Their daughter Emma is a rebellious adolescent who yearns to escape her family. Their son Wesley is a young son and the only one to take care of the family by taking over his father's responsibilities. The Tate family wants to sell their farm because of their debts. A real estate agent, Taylor comes home to buy the house, and Ella starts an affair with him. While Ella is about to sell the house, she learns that Weston has already sold it to a club owner, and she tries to take the money back from Ellis. Later, police officers come home stating that Emma has been arrested due to giving harm to Ellis' club. At the end of the play, the gang members whom Weston owes money come home and blow up Tate family's car.

The familial curse, the search for identity, and the father-son conflict are the main themes of the play. The intergenerational curse which is transmitted from fathers to sons is represented by the characters' names which also show similarity to Sam Shepard's life:

Since the name of the playwright's father was also Samuel Shepard, and the original name of the playwright is Sam Shepard VII, and that he himself has a son named Samuel, it may be strongly suggested that the idea of the son being a repetition of the father in *Curse* is an allusion to the life of Sam Shepard. This idea of blood determinism, together with the concept of the 'curse,' is tightly woven into the texture of the play especially in terms of the theme of identity. (Akıllı 52)

The play opens with a scene that shows the tension among the family members caused by the father's disappearance after he violently breaks the door of their house. Throughout the play, the absence of the father figure shows itself inside the house in which everyone tries to announce his/ her own authority even including the people

who are out of the family and trespass on their land with the excuse of the absent door. Wesley's compensation for his father is symbolized by his repairing the broken door, and at the end, the absence of father authority is filled by Wesley who appears in his father's clothes claiming that this identity suits him, which demonstrates that Wesley is ready to take the control of the house.

In Act I, the description of the kitchen furniture characterizes what kind of life the family is leading in that house. The aloofness and the dysfunction of the family can be sensed through the setting. That "four mismatched metal chairs are set one at each side of the table" (1.135) indicates the four family members Emma, Ella, Wesley, and Weston who are aloof and disconnected under the same roof just like the separate chairs standing around the same table. Later, along with the dialogues of the characters at the very beginning of the play, the absence of a tranquil atmosphere in the house is revealed. In the first act, there is an ongoing tension among mother, son, and daughter which is obviously felt through their dialogues. Until the end of the act, the father is not seen, but instead, Taylor comes into the house with the aim of buying it.

In Act II, there is a conflict over selling the house. Weston sells the house to Ellis, whereas Ella sells it to Taylor without knowing what the other has done. While Taylor is working to buy the house, he learns that the house has already been sold to Ellis by Weston. Taylor, claiming that Weston does not have the authority to sell a house, decides to take it back from Ellis. While these incidents are taking place, Weston is mostly unconscious sleeping on the table. In Act I and II, the family members are detached from each other, as all of them want to leave the house by selling the farm. Ella dreams of going to Europe with the hope of finding a better life there; Emma being an impulsive daughter wants to go to Mexico and be a mechanic; Wesley wants to go to Alaska saying that the undiscovered frontier attracts him. On the other hand, he also wants to make their house a home again.

Act III is the part when the transformation of father and son occurs. Weston returns to his role as a father and decides to stay in the house in a peaceful way; however, his loans to people and Emma's crime and going into jail demonstrate that it is not easy to leave what they had already lived behind. The family needs to face

their past. At the end, Emma takes her mother's car to go for another crime, and at that moment, the men Weston owes explode the car. Although Weston is ready to be reborn in his new identity, he cannot bring back the unity lost in the family.



1.1 Fallen Father and Wanton Son

In the first act of the play, the father's violence and the resulting disturbance display themselves when Weston wants to come into the house drunk. Ella says that she called the cops as she felt threatened by her husband Weston being drunk and breaking the door of their house. Wesley, who must be frightened, describes those traumatic moments as follows,

Foot kicking. Foot kicking harder. Wood splitting. Man's voice. In the night. Foot kicking hard through door. One foot right through door. Bottle crashing. Glass breaking. Fist through door. Man cursing. Man going insane. Feet and hands tearing. Head smashing. Man yelling. Shoulder smashing. Whole body crashing. Woman screaming. Mom screaming. Mom screaming for police. Man throwing wood. Man throwing up. Mom calling cops. Dad crashing away. (1.138)

In Wesley's description, alienation from his father is felt through his way of addressing. He prefers to use the word "mom", while he chooses "man" instead of dad. He aims to discard violence from the family by not using a family member title. On the other hand, he shares the feelings of his mother's fear and helplessness.

Weston is a father who is mostly not present at the house. In addition to owing a lot of money, he also has a prison record. Therefore, it is inferred that he is not a quintessential father figure nor a suitable role model for his children especially for his son who is expected to be more influenced by the father figure. Wesley is a young boy who is trying to build his personality in this restless house while feeling responsible for his mother and sister. In the play, Wesley seems to be the only person who wants to bond with his family and with the place where he lives, whereas all the

other members of the family are detached from the notion of being a family. Rather than promoting family unity, Weston, Emma, and Ella are seeking ways of fulfilling their own dreams. However diligently Wesley works to undo the harm his father has caused, like building a new door that was broken by Weston, he makes the effort to hold the family together, Weston and Ella have no sense of belonging to the house, and they want to sell it.

The underlying reason for both Weston and Ella's desire to sell the house is nothing for the good of their family but their individual motives such as Weston's debts and Ella's European dream. This apathy towards their family generates a gap of authority which enables strangers like Taylor and Ellis to interfere in their lives. Taylor, who is also believed to have a hidden relationship with Ella, wants to buy the house. In the second act, Ella fills the fridge with the groceries that Taylor brought by taking the artichokes out. Artichokes are the only thing Weston brings to his family who is starving. By changing sustenance with Taylor's, Ella shows that Taylor is in the power of the household, not Weston. Feeding the family is regarded as one of the most significant social roles of a father, and Taylor takes this role from Weston by emasculating him. Taylor is more like a figure who takes advantage of the lack of authority caused by Weston as he tries to get what he wants by pleasing Ella. When Taylor learns the house had already been sold by Weston, he claims that Weston is incompetent to sell a house and shows Weston's deficiencies to Wesley:

He doesn't have a leg to stand on [...]. The point is that your father's psychologically and emotionally unfit to be responsible for his own actions, and, therefore, any legal negotiations issuing from him cannot be held binding. This can be easily proven in a court of law. We have first-hand evidence that he's prone to fits of violence. His license for driving has been revoked, and yet he still keeps driving. He's unable to get insurance. He's unable to hold a steady job. He's absent from his home ninety percent of the time. He has a jail record. It's an open and shut case. (2.179)

Taylor's words reveal Weston's irresponsible and incapable role in the family. In addition to his irresponsibility, he is depraved and even a criminal. Even Ella does not avoid explicitly humiliating her husband: "Does that look like competence to you? Take a look at him! He's pathetic" (2.174)! It proves that Weston is respected neither by his family nor by strangers. Her sentences prove that anyone can substitute Weston easily as he is not strong enough to defend himself and his family. The father is the cause of trouble in the family rather than a figure of authority and reliance. It can be said that he is also the principal reason for dysfunctionality in the family.

Weston's dissipation and intemperate lifestyle induces a curse upon the family which affects the next generation. Emma's craving for independence by leaving home is caused by her longing to uproot her cursed life. Likewise, the father's position in the family as to what kind of a role model he is for the son determines the son's developmental period and personality. That Weston who does not have a leg to stand on, is an impotent and violent man, causes his son Wesley to have the same characteristics. Wesley does not have a good father figure as a role model, so he is trying to create a more meaningful life and to belong somewhere. Wesley's fate in this family is to be the wanton son which is explained by Michael Abbott as follows;

The wanton son is a perpetual outsider, longing to belong to something or someone, but fearing that connection. He is preoccupied with figuring out what he's supposed to do with his life. He lives in a family that only intensifies his feeling of isolation. He wants out, but he can't leave. When he tries to leave, something draws him back. He yearns for a real home, but knows he could never live in one. [...] The wanton son endures with the painful awareness that he is cursed by his ancestry that his fate has been determined, largely, by his father. (Abbot 193, 195)

This description of the wanton son figure precisely fits Wesley. The name of the play is self-explanatory which foreshadows the dysfunctionality of the family that is caused by the curse. Wesley is not able to get independent of his father altogether because he carries the burden of his feckless father. Weston's characteristics and life mold Wesley's future.

At first, Wesley endeavors to fill the gap left by his father. The most visible action of this effort is building a new door. Contrary to his father, Wesley wants to keep his family safe and resist the jeopardy which might come outside of the family. A door, not only symbolically but also literally, plays a crucial part in the house in terms of separating inside and outside, or in other words, a safe zone and danger. As there is no door, Taylor comes into the house without any need to be welcomed. Thus, he supposes he has the right to trespass. Moreover, Wesley would like to be regarded as a potent figure who is able to protect and take care of the family. He comes out against his mother when she calls the cops after Weston breaks the door. Wesley says: "It's humiliating to have the cops come to your own house. Makes me feel like we're someone else" (1.136). His desire to lead his father's role in the family and prove that he can protect his mother even from his own father can be explained by the Oedipus Complex. As a result of either a weakness or the absence of a father in the family, the son begins to get encouraged to adopt his father's role and achieve what his father could not do. According to Freud, this rivalry between the father and son is caused by the Oedipus Complex.

In Act III, when Weston undergoes a metamorphosis from an inept father figure into an invigorated man, Wesley's identification with his father is enabled. This identification is a significant part of the dissolution of the Oedipus Complex in which the son accepts the presence of a father figure with whom he cannot compete. As a result, the son acquiesces to the triadic relationship thereby realizing that he is as large a part of his father as he was his mother's during the Phallic Stage. The most symbolic demonstration of this identification takes place in the third act when Wesley appears in his father's clothes which Weston had taken off in the previous act while he was metamorphosing. Like his father, Wesley to achieve a rebirth and

get rid of his predetermined personality; however, he cannot succeed in becoming anyone but his father. When Ella asks Wesley what he was doing in his father's clothes, he says:

WESLEY. I tried his remedy, but it didn't work.

EMMA. He's got a remedy?

WESLEY. {half to himself} I tried taking a hot bath. Hot as I could stand it. Then freezing cold. Then walking around naked. But it didn't work. Nothing happened. I was waiting for something to happen[...] . I started putting all his clothes on. His baseball cap, his tennis shoes, his overcoat. And every time I put one thing on it seemed like a part of him was growing on me. I could feel him taking over me. (3. 196)

Wesley says that his father's clothes fit him. This realization brings about the acceptance of his inability to disconnect from his father. He does not have any choice but to sustain his father's ancestry. Lyons interprets Wesley's endeavor to transform as a process of acting out; "he removes his clothing, refreshes or purifies himself in a cleansing bath, and walks naked through his house in a self-conscious reconstitution of his identity. In Wesley's attempt to incorporate the identity of his father, he acts out what Weston only tells us about" (Lyons, 1990: 30, 31). The more he tries to regenerate, the more he becomes his father. Being a part of the familial curse and violent father is Wesley's trauma which comes out in the moment he seeks a remedy to be rid of it.

1.2. Conscious and Unconscious

Sigmund Freud's "repetition compulsion" theory can be applied to the inevitable cycle inside the family, which reinstates through the generations. Sons follow their fathers' pattern despite their unawareness of being mired in this repetitive cycle of ancestry. Also, the 'compulsion to repeat' provides the traumatic characters with a form of treatment which enables them to act-out what had been repressed. Since the repressed traumas lie in the state of the unconscious, coming to the surface -in other words becoming conscious- requires hypnosis. One needs to dissociate himself from the present and able to surrender to his past in a hypnotic state. Freud explains his theory in his article *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*, 1914 as follows;

In these hypnotic treatments the process of remembering took a very simple form. The patient put himself back into an earlier situation, which he seemed never to confuse with the present one, and gave an account of the mental processes belonging to it, in so far as they had remained normal; he then added to this whatever was able to emerge as a result of transforming the processes that had at the time been unconscious into conscious ones. (2499)

In the play, a table in the house plays the role of hypnosis with its function to trigger characters' transformation. Weston and Ella experience their transference from present to past, and this transference is also from conscious to unconscious on the table. Weston sleeps on the table several times especially when significant incidents happen like the selling of the house is discussed. In different scenes, Weston is seen lying on the table unconsciously: "He finally gets on table so that he's lying flat out on it. He slowly goes unconscious" (2. 170); "Slowly WESTON goes unconscious again as Wesley watches him lying on table [...]" (2.172); "WESTON remains

unconscious” (2.176). Sam Shepard preferred to use the word unconsciousness instead of sleep which emphasizes the significance of this repeating phase. Weston is so content with this state of unconsciousness that he advises Ella to try it as well.

Try the table. Nice and hard. It'll do wonders for you [...] You'll be amazed. Better than any bed [...] That's the trouble with too much comfort, you know? Makes you forget where you come from. Makes you lose touch. You think you're making headway but you're losing all the time. You're falling behind more and more. You're going into a trance that you'll never come back from. You're being hypnotized. Your body's being mesmerized. You go into a coma. That's why you need a hard table once in a while to bring you back. A good hard table to bring you back to life. (3.190)

Depending on Weston's experience of transformation, it is possible to infer that when one is not courageous enough to make a change in his life, he keeps returning to his past, living with his repressions which he forgot but continues to act out. He seems to be hypnotized and unable to make any decisions to change the flow of his life. If one does not discover and resolve the resulting traumas, he lives in a whirlpool. Therefore, Weston says that you need to go out of your comfort zone to break habits so that you can make a real change in your life. The table becomes the place which Weston sheds his past and starts to live in the present with a new identity. Although Weston claims that comfort is the thing that causes hypnosis, he actually finds more comfort on the table than a bed when he states that it is “better than any bed”. In this scenario, the table helps him find a better place to face his past which enables him come back to the present. The thing Weston experiences on the table corresponds to Freud's description of hypnosis. Weston describes hypnosis as a means of going back in time, to confront repressions and lose all kinds of attachment to consciousness. Lying on the table creates the same effect on him. Thanks to these

trancelike moments on the table, he remembers his other self who used to take care of his family and when he had a sense of belonging to the place where he lived.

Act II closes with Weston waking up with an effort to steady himself when he returns to his conscious state. “WESTON just stays sitting up on the table. He looks around the stage. He gets to his feet and tries to steady himself” (2.182). The effort to get steady is like a response to prove the opposite of what Ella thinks of her husband’s being invisible in the house:

WESLEY. Somebody does live here!

ELLA. Who! Not your father!

WESLEY. He works on it. He does the watering.

ELLA. When he can stand up. How often is that? (1.146-147)

Standing up and making an effort to get steady proves that Weston is ready to return to the family life which he had neglected. He prepares breakfast, does the laundry which proves that he literally begins to contribute to the home and wants to be noticed as a full-fledged family member.

1.3. Uncanny

The compulsion to repeat is closely connected to the phenomena of 'uncanny'. Freud marks the relation with these words; "whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny" (Freud, 1919: 3690). In this play, the compulsion to repeat results in uncanny situations such as having a doppelgänger, castration anxiety, and rebirth. Throughout the play, several incidents are caused by a compulsion to repeat many of which are revealed through acting-out. Wesley's acting-out is mostly a repetition of what Weston had experienced or told before. Acting out becomes a part of uncanny because something forgotten comes to the surface. coincidences. "Freud relates this kind of the uncanny experience [involuntary repetitions] with the infantile psychology and "compulsion to repeat," which is directly connected with the unconscious and childhood traumas. The thing that is repeated is considered to be the result of the process of repression" (Bektaş 14). Uncanny is defined as the 'return of the repressed', and when a person acts out, he also displays what he has repressed.

In Act III, Wesley repeats his father's actions appearing in his father's clothes, and he begins to copy his father's past experiences. Wesley becomes exactly like his father in appearance. Butchering the lamb which he once had affection for, demonstrates Wesley's inheritance of his father's poisonous violent essence. Wesley turns into Weston's alter ego when he mends the door and defies outsiders who come to invade the house as he acts out the things which his father could not achieve, so he assumes the leading father role by taking full responsibility. By creating an identity that is the same as his father, Wesley becomes Weston's double, or in other words, doppelgänger. Becoming a doppelgänger is also another expression of identification that is expected to take place between the son and father. Freud explains the uncanniness of doppelgänger as follows:

the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing-the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (Freud, 1919: 3686)

That Wesley becomes his father exhibits all the features of Freud's uncanny doppelgänger description. He becomes more of his father in terms of character, appearance, and behavior in addition to sharing the same name.

A split personality or seeing oneself as if he was looking at someone else, is also another kind of reflection of doppelgänger that causes uncanny. Weston experiences this state of perceiving himself as another person after he completes his metamorphosis. He tells those uncanny moments when he became estranged from himself with these words:

I started wondering who this was walking around in the orchard at six-thirty in the morning. It didn't feel like me. It was some character in a dark overcoat and tennis shoes and a baseball cap and stickers comin' out of his face[...] . Tried to get the feeling of it really being me in my own house. It was like peeling off a whole person. A whole stranger. (3.186)

Although he sees himself as a stranger doing laundry, building a door, and serving breakfast, it is obvious that he feels more connected to his family and house. He becomes a part of his family rather than a stranger. He proclaims his transformation as a rebirth. "IT'S ALL OVER WITH BECAUSE I'VE BEEN REBORN! I'M A WHOLE NEW PERSON NOW! I'm a whole new person" (3.193). Therefore, rather

than creating a totally new persona, what he does is to find his forgotten father role in the family, in other words, his reborn identity is a kind of return of the suppressed which is also uncanny.

Another example of rebirth is symbolised by the lamb. The animal which needs care and a warm home to get cleaned of its maggots also might be Wesley's reflection, so the lamb can be interpreted as Wesley's doppelgänger soul in a different form. As Sahar Mokbel notes: "The lamb represents Wesley himself, for both are infected and need treatment" (21). Even Wesley cannot distinguish the lamb from himself. When he butchered the lamb, he says "I had the lamb's blood dripping down my arms. I thought it was me for a second. I thought it was me bleeding" (3.196). Wesley and lamb become so intertwined that he cannot understand who bleeds. It is an uncanny experience that a person sees himself in the body of an animal. Slater, who comes to buy the house, makes a comment on the lamb carcass which is skinned: "[It] looks like somebody's afterbirth to me" (3.199)! That the lamb is skinned resembles Wesley's situation when he was wandering naked being in a need of remedy. Ella also experiences an uncanny situation that is created by the lamb. She suddenly says she has remembered the story which Weston had told the lamb. By looking at the lamb carcass she feels something unearthly, and she says: "Something just went right through me. Just from looking at this lamb" (3.200). Apart from remembering, she even completes the story which Weston did not before. This scene plays as if the lamb which knew the story, had come to life, and transmitted it to Ella.

Castration anxiety is also something uncanny which is seen in this play. Freud tells the 'Sand-Man' story in his article "The 'Uncanny'", and there he explains the relation between uncanny and castration anxiety. He says: "I think, that feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man, that is, to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes [...]" (3683). He points out that the fear of losing one's eyes is the same as castration anxiety. The scene in which this castration anxiety is seen, takes place in Act III when every individual in the play completed his/her transformation process. At the very beginning of this act, he tells a story of an eagle. He tells how he was castrating lambs to another lamb that Wesley

had brought inside the house at the beginning of the play. This castration scene is both literal and symbolic in terms of its association with Freud's theory which was mentioned in "Totem and Taboo". During Weston's lamb castration an eagle comes and tries to take the lambs' testes, in other words, their manhood. The eagles are just like Ellis and Taylor who are after Weston's manhood when he is unconscious as if castrated and had no power. The eagle comes "like he's coming in for a land" (3.184) just like Ellis and Taylor who are after the land. When Weston talks about a giant eagle, he says that "he was after those testes. Those fresh little remnants of manlihood" (3.184). That this scene comes directly after Taylor and Ellis tussling with each other to buy the land proves Weston's underlying desire for triumph over these men as he performs the same kind of emasculation which he experienced on the lambs. His lamb castration can be interpreted as a way of acting-out a trauma.

The time he tells the eagle story coincides with his decision to stay in the house. Also, at this moment Weston builds a new door to hinder outsiders from coming in and invading the home. Weston's sentence at the end of the story "something brought me straight up"(3.184) is similar to the situation that "he gets to his feet and tries to steady himself" (2.182) when everyone goes out of the house including Ellis, Taylor, and all his family.

1.4 Heredity and Curse

In this play, the family's life, which lacks both prosperity and success, is completely the opposite of the American Dream. Instead of a happy family portrait, there is a fragmented one in which members are lost in their own misery besides having no sense of unity inside the family. The curse on this family comes through their ancestors. All the family members live ostensible lives in which they have dreams for the future, but in reality, are entangled with the incessant curse. As Matthew Roudané remarks:

Curse of the Starving Class concerns a family whose members are forever destined, biologically, to remain blood relations, but a “curse” infects this family, a pestilence that goes well beyond heredity and genetics. Economically and socially, psychologically and spiritually, Weston and Ella and their offspring remain forever doomed, fated to be entrapped in overbearing relationships, dependent on each other even though such dependency leads toward violence and destruction” (Roudané, 2000: 347-348).

Despite their longing for attachment, they are unable to escape their haunted destiny to fail and follow their parents' values. As Charles Lyons mentions, even the names in the play are indications of the cyclical pattern in the family which make the search for identity futile. There is “a[n] artificially symmetrical scheme - Weston/Wesley; Ella/Emma. This contrived conflation of names suggests, early in the play, that the text relates the younger figures to the older; and, as the play progresses, we see certain ways in which the children replicate or substitute for their parents” (Lyons, 2014: 125). In other words, the daughter is an inevitable and interwoven part of her mother as much as the son is of his father.

The chain of following the ancestor's pattern can be observed in Wesley, Wesley's father, and Wesley's grandfather relation which demonstrates three-generation-curse. Something in their blood urges them to repeat the same patterns without going beyond the boundaries which had already been determined for them. Weston scolds Wesley for watching and following himself, and he asks; "Why are you watching me all the time" (2.169)? In fact, that Wesley is watching his father all the time proves that Weston, as a father, is the role model for Wesley; therefore, Wesley has no other choice than to repeat what his father does. Likewise, Weston says that he used to watch his own father as well:

You know I watched my old man move around. I watched him move through rooms. I watched him drive tractors, watched him watching baseball, watched him keeping out of the way of things. Out of the way of my mother. Away from my brothers. Watched him on the sidelines. Nobody saw him but me. Everybody was right there, but nobody saw him but me. He lived apart. Right in the midst of things and he lived apart. Nobody saw that. (2.169)

The constant repetition of the word 'watch' demonstrates that a son needs to observe and track his father while constructing his own identity. In several scenes, Wesley's actions come into being as reproduction of Weston's manners and identity being a result of inheritance and an inescapable cycle.

William Henry denotes the role of pattern in the family and tells how the characters "reverse roles or take on each other's characteristics because the nature of the interaction between them matters more than who plays which part. They are trapped in patterns so central to their lives that any liberation or enlightenment in one member is immediately offset by the regression of another" (qtd. in Akıllı 52). This regression can be observed in the play as the father and son change roles in terms of their movement. While Wesley is constructing a new identity and growing up with

his hopes for the future, Weston goes backward getting buried more into his traumatic personality as violence or excessive alcohol consumption. On the other hand, after Weston's transformation, he begins to heal, whereas, from that moment on, Wesley is the one who would try to figure out the question: "how come I'm going backwards" (3.198)? Therefore, they cannot succeed in the healing process as a family or at least father and son in harmony.

Act III opens with Weston's unexpected appearance. Right after the last scene in Act II when he is unconscious on the table, Weston stands up and appears in his other-self. His transformation becomes visible here. "He's minus his overcoat, baseball cap, and tennis shoes and wears a fresh clean shirt, new pants, shined shoes, and has had a shave. He seems sober now and in high spirits compared to before" (3.183). He seems self-confident and spirited in his sober and conscious state. The unconscious and hypnotic periods result in his healing; as a result, he gets rid of his father's ". As the hereditary curse poisons the generations, which is specifically seen through fathers and sons in this play, the curse circulates in the blood of three generations as Wesley, Weston, and Weston's father. Weston explains how he came to an understanding that he is affected by the curse:

WESTON. I never saw my old man's poison until I was much older than you.
Much older. And then you know how I recognized it?

WESLEY. How?

WESTON. Because I saw myself infected with it. That's how. I saw me carrying it around. His poison in my body. You think that's fair? (2.168)

With his transformation, he constructs his identity again by disposing of his father's toxic curse. That he even has removed his old clothes manifests his transformation. He says that he decided to stay in the house; moreover, he built a new door. By means of using the table, the goal of creating the realm of transference between

consciousness and unconsciousness is achieved. Like the process of treatment in a hypnotic session, the table has the ability to send the patient to his earlier situation to face his traumas.

The table, which helps Weston, also helps Ella reach an unconscious state although it does not have the same effect as it has on Weston. Like Weston, “Ella suddenly wakes up on the table. She sits up straight” (3.198). She is “as though waking from a bad dream”. Her pose which is similar to Weston’s standing up and getting steady has the same meaning in terms of its effect on returning to the conscious state and being ready to move forward from that moment on. However, she does not experience any kind of transformation. It might be because of the reason that she did not inherit the same curse which affects the men of the family because she comes from a different family. Going unconscious does not resolve anything as she had no traumas in childhood or in her past, but has just acquired the curse.

Weston says that Ella is not a direct descendant of the family. In other words, the curse comes through the sons starting with Weston’s father. Ella is not blood kin of this curse; however, she began to acquire it by witnessing this trauma. According to Freud, witnessing a trauma ignites a new trauma.

ELLA. Don't be ridiculous! I'm not self-destructive. Doesn't run in my family line.

WESTON. That's right I never thought about it like that. You're the only one who doesn't have it Only us.

ELLA. Oh, so now I'm the outsider.

WESTON. Well, it's true. You come from a different class of people. (3.189)

Ella meets the curse for the first time when she gets married to Weston and becomes a part of a different family root.

ELLA: Do you know what this is? It's a curse. I can feel it. It's invisible but it's there. It's always there. It comes onto us like nighttime. Every day I can feel it. Every day I can see it coming. And it always comes. Repeats itself. It comes even when you do everything to stop it from coming. Even when you try to change it. And it goes back [...] It goes forward too. We spread it We pass it on. We inherit it and pass it down, and then pass it down again. It goes on and on like that without us. (2.174)

In her speech, the power of the curse and its interrelation with ‘compulsion to repeat’ in addition to traumas that hold a place in the past, is demonstrated. The curse tends to repeat itself and is passed down resulting in intergenerational traumas. Also, Ella expresses how the curse influences generations through heredity.

Like Wesley, Emma mirrors a personality influenced by the haunting cursed blood trait. Many of her outrageous and disregarded behaviors have a relation with his father’s personality. Like Weston, she also wants to go to Mexico for a new life, be as far away as possible and cut the bonds with the family. It is obvious that she does not have any affiliation with her family and every action she takes is for the sake of leaving the home. With the ambition of it, she does not avoid giving harm to herself and the others. Her rebellious character ends up with violence, shooting a bar, and sexual favors to go out of jail. Moreover, she admits that she takes pleasure in these kinds of immoral activities. Ella and Wesley have a chat where they talk about Emma:

ELLA. Possession of firearms. Malicious vandalism. Breaking and entering.
Assault Violation of equestrian regulations. You name it.

WESTON. Well, she always was a fireball.

ELLA. Part of the inheritance, right?

WESTON. Right Direct descendant. (3.190)

To create a chart for a school project, Emma kills a chicken which she raised herself. Wesley also kills the lamb which has been in the house for a while. The lamb is more than an animal for the family, and it is personified when Weston tells the eagle story to the lamb. The action of telling a story to a lamb can be perceived as a kind of companionship. However, killing the lamb at the end shows that the family members are unable to develop real affection. Wesley's killing the lamb is also a significant biblical symbol. In Christianity, the lamb is associated with Jesus as a symbol of suffering and triumph. Also, the lamb is sacrificed for the forgiveness of human beings' sins. In the play, Wesley's killing the lamb serves the same purpose, and Wesley can be interpreted "as the redeemer of familial guilt through performing a ritual sacrifice" (Lyons, 1990: 32). In this regard, he sacrifices the lamb to atone for the intergenerational sin of the family.

CHAPTER TWO

BURIED CHILD

Buried Child premiered in 1978, was highly praised, and one year after, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. It is a three- act play which allows the audience/reader to discover the family nucleus layer by layer. The traumatized family members are on the stage with their quasi insouciance despite their contemptible past which they would like to forget. Their past comes to light through their dialogues and acting-out the traumas. Through this family, Sam Shepard illustrates another fragmented American family who has disappointments rather than hope. The play depicts an American family who hides the horrible secret of incest. Dodge and Halie have three kids, and Halie committed incest with her eldest son, Tilden, many years ago. In order to get rid of that curse, Dodge drowned and buried the newborn baby in the backyard. Then, Dodge quit cultivating crops in the backyard and began to lead an unproductive life by smoking, drinking, and sitting on the couch all day. Dodge's inertia causes a lack of authority in all the sons of the family. As Robert Burk remarks;

Shepard's plays exhibit numerous images of bodies which have been mutilated or which manifest either lack or loss of control. In the family of *Buried Child* each character is constituted around such a lack: Dodge's physical frailty, Tilden's loss of mental capacity, Bradley's wooden leg, the deceased Ansel's lost life, and Vince's lost connection with his family. (21)

Tilden has been to Mexico and returns home with a criminal past; Bradley has a tendency towards violence, and Ansel who was regarded as the most honorable son suspiciously died in the hotel room. After many years, Tilden's mysterious son Vince arrives with his girlfriend Shelly, and their arrival sheds light on the family's repressed past.

A farmhouse is a symbolic element of prosperous American families, and it is a way to keep the family together through generations whereby inheriting the farm to the children. Yet, the family's farm in this play, like the empty fridge in **Curse of the Starving Class**, is barren and infertile symbolizing the disillusionment of the American dream which entails gratified families. Instead of a perfect family picture, there is a family whose members are incapable of maintaining their roles inside the family and following ethical norms. The children who are expected to maintain their family's prosperous farm through generations end up sustaining their father's curse and incompetency. In **Buried Child**, the trauma not only stems from the family's repression of their past but also the lack of national guilt caused by historical amnesia about war. In this play, Shepard gives "voice through resonant use of ritual and symbol to destructive and frightening aspects of American society that have long been silenced" (Adler 121). Halie's pride in Ansel's heroic military success and Tilden's being an "All-American" (1.72) collapses with Ansel's death not on a battlefield but in a hotel room and Tilden's impotency resulting in need of care. Her shattering hopes are the expression of the American Dream, and the buried child in the yard is the clearest evidence of a certain disillusionment of this dream, and burying it is a way of erasing the disappointment.

The beginning of Act I illustrates a gloomy atmosphere which is sensed by the repeated use of the adjective 'dark' to describe the scene. On the couch, the "patriarch" Dodge sits with a blanket covering him. He watches TV with intermittent moments of coughing and drinking his whiskey. It evokes a pathetic image. His wife Halie on the other hand is upstairs asking questions and controlling Dodge. Her location on the top demonstrates the reverse hierarchical order in the house and the mother is in charge (Opipari 134). The traditional mother role in America changed radically with the feminism movement, so women are not restricted by their domestic roles at home anymore. Halie goes far beyond the limits with her extramarital affair with a minister. She does not even hide it from Dodge, and his indifference to this relationship demonstrates that he has already renounced his role as a husband and patriarch. Dodge's impression as a fallen patriarch is reinforced by his need for protection from his own child. When Dodge is afraid of his son, Bradley, for cutting

his hair while sleeping, Halie comforts him by saying “Tilden is the oldest. He’ll protect you” (1.68). While the children are supposed to be in need of their father’s support and help, this play is turning the domestic roles upside down. This perplexity sows the confusion as to who the real father is as Dodge is supplanted by Tilden now that Halie has a child from her incestuous relationship with him. Tilden’s homecoming after twenty years functions as the first enclosure of the repressed trauma, so Dodge is not pleased with his arrival.

Dodge always assumes that heavy rain is the reflection of his despair. The despondent air over home and infertility are symbolized by rain. Despite Dodge’s uneasiness, the rain accounts for prosperity for Halie and Tilden since it is raining at the time when corn miraculously grows. Tilden says he likes going out back “[e]specially in the rain. I like the feeling of it” (1.79), and Halie is enchanted with the growing corn at the end saying “[m]aybe the rain did something” (3.132). Contrary to Tilden and Halie, rain is Dodge’s excuse for escaping the outer world. “He prefers rigid boundaries that keep everyone, literally, at least an arm’s length away. He seals himself off from the outside, content to waste away his days inside the house to escape shame” (Opipari 133). Halie recounts a memory from a time before her marriage when she went horse racing with a man in Florida. She says it was “[a]bsolutely wonderful! The sun was just gleaming” (1.66). Then Dodge, by making a reference to her happy days, says: “It’s not raining in California or Florida or the race track. Only in Illinois. This is the only place it’s raining. All over the rest of the world, it’s bright golden sunshine” (1.75). With this sentence, he implies that they could not manage to achieve the American Dream that would provide them with a glamorous and sparkling life. That it is always raining precludes attaining the brightness in their lives.

In Act II, Tilden’s son Vince comes home after several years. The uneasy atmosphere becomes more awkward when nobody recognizes Vince upon his arrival. He arrives with his girlfriend Shelly and she becomes nervous about the circumstances as she hoped to find a stable family home in which “[she] thought everyone knew each other” (2.92). Throughout Act II, Vince tries to remind Dodge and other members about himself except for Halie because she is the only one who

recognizes him. His attempts to connect with his roots end in his family's indifference. Thanks to the dialogue among Dodge, Vince, and Shelly, the past reminds itself the most at the times when it is being repressed. In this act, outsiders like Shelly and Vince, help disclose the past without breaking the linear timeline.

The presence of the outsider naturalises the discussion of the past, both by presenting a figure who questions those who inhabit the space and by the newcomer's own revelation of knowledge that the inhabitants do not possess[...] . Shelly, forces the dialogue to confront the past, despite the energy with which the grandparents, his father and uncle expend to suppress it. (Lyons, 2014: 119)

The more Dodge and Tilden reject the past, the more they remember and are reminded of it through acting-out. Tilden is the first one to divulge the sinful past when he tells Shelly: "We had a baby. (motioning to DODGE) He did. Dodge did. Could pick it up with one hand. Put it in the other. Little baby. Dodge killed it" (2.104). He uses the pronoun "we", and he does not explicitly express whose baby it was. When Dodge is talking about the baby, he also does not own him but just says Halie had a baby. Therefore, the father is not pointed out; nonetheless, Dodge implies that Tilden is the father. He says "[the baby] wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be a part of us" (3.124) just like Vince who comes unexpectedly and wants to be welcomed as a family member. Now, Dodge does not behave differently from the past by not acknowledging Vince as a part of the family just as he had not before.

In Act III, Dodge talks about the buried child for the first time and reveals his reaction upon the baby's arrival. He says, "[i]t made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was canceled out by this one mistake. This one weakness" (3.124). His admission and disclosure play a significant role in his facing

what he repressed. In this act, it is Vince who does not recognize Dodge, so Dodge reminds him by saying: “It’s me! Your Gandfather!” (3.126). The moment he acknowledges being Vince’s grandfather comes just after he uncovers the buried child. Therefore, the fact that he recalls and tells the past plays a significant role in accepting Vince’s existence. At the end of the play, after Dodge designates Vince as his grandson, he passes his house down to Vince just before he dies.



2.1 Fallen Father Figure and Oedipus Complex

As in **Curse of the Starving Class**, there is a fallen father and a wanton son who are even more pathetic in this play. In this play, there is also an alcoholic and inefficient father figure. Unlike Weston, who is absent most of the time, Dodge is always at home because of his own immobility, yet constantly being at home does not give him the utmost control over his family. He is there, but he is inconspicuous. His invisibility and absence are defined at the beginning of the first act; “He’s covered himself in an old brown blanket. He’s very thin and sickly looking, in his late seventies” (1.63), and he keeps this stable mood until the end of the play without moving anywhere and just drinking alcohol on his couch. Dodge, is an old and abject man, hence not a respected figure in the family. More than a quintessential father figure, he is like an inanimate object that is always at the same place. The dysfunctionality of the family stems from the father’s unauthorized role and his ambiguous relation with his family. From a psychological perspective, the analysis of the father figure’s influence on his son and his family will be done in regard to Freud’s theory in this chapter. Having an inept father results in the development of negative traits in his sons.

According to *Fathers and Adolescents* by Krenke and Schulman, sons cannot establish a good relationship with their fathers if there is a strong mother and inept father in the house as it is in **Buried Child**. It would be possible for the son to find his identity only if his father was strong enough to overcome his traumas and solve his mid-life crisis (67). The sense of trust and attachment among the family members in **Buried Child** is missing, and it is mainly caused by the incompetence of the father who is not there as a figure to unite the family. His incompetency is also the main reason for incest in the family. Freud denotes that the deprivation of a strong father figure hinders the son’s separation from the mother. When this separation does not occur successfully, it leads to Oedipus Complex and incest which is seen in this play between the mother (Halie) and the son (Tilden). That Tilden is intellectually disabled demonstrates his immaturity and inability to complete all the psychosexual stages properly which is required for his development. Mentally, he is almost at the

Phallic Stage which also symbolizes that Tilden could not leave the Oedipus Complex stage behind and proceed to the next stage in which he comes to the point of identification with his father. It might be deduced that Vince was born out of an incestuous relationship, and from his age, it is understood that the incest happened when Tilden was in his 20's. At this age, a son is expected to abandon his sexual desires for his mother. However, as he could not find a father figure to identify with, Tilden continued to perceive Dodge as a rival with whom he competes to obtain his mother. According to Freudian theory, "by identifying with the father, the child imitates and later incorporates adult roles. The child also learns how sexual partners deal with one another, cope with disappointments, and share attention and affection in triadic and family constellations" (Krenke and Shulman 9). As Dodge is already defunct, he can be discarded without any difficulty. Besides, as Tilden could not find a father figure to identify with, he could not accept the triadic relationship which would enable him to accept the existence of a father and separate himself from his mother. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud explains the significance of social norms for a moral society. Incest is considered such a serious crime that it is punished with death. In Melanesia, there are extremely strict rules to prevent the incestuous relationship between the sister and brother. For instance, they must not call each other by their names which might result in intimacy, so calling each other in the most formal way is one of the requirements. (2658). When Tilden exceeds the formal limits by calling his mother with her name when he says: "Never told Halie" (2.104), he violates one of the most significant rules to prevent incest.

One of the requirements of preventing incest is the development of a super-ego. As it is expressed in the play many times, Tilden is intellectually disabled, and he is not mature enough to come to the stage where the super-ego is formed. Another reason why Tilden does not have a super-ego that enables him to avoid abhorrent actions condemned by society is the absence of a role model who needs to be his father. For a son, identification with his father is a prominent way to develop his super-ego. As Tilden cannot find a father figure with whom he can identify, his super-ego development cannot be successful. Therefore, he does not have a mechanism to evaluate his actions in terms of ethical norms, and he is unable to

generate the requisite shame for his incestuous relationship with his mother. Unlike Tilden, Dodge feels the guilt of incest, and he wants to keep this secret hidden by killing Tilden's baby as a way of disposing of guilt. However, Dodge exacerbates the uneasiness by killing the baby while he wanted to erase the trauma which was caused by this baby itself. In other words, his attempt to demolish the object of the trauma brought a bigger one. Oedipus's two crimes that are parricide and incest with the mother, in this play, are replaced by infanticide and incest.

Incest and infanticide devastate the family, and its expression is observed in all of the family members. Dodge's reluctance and incapability to move forward are the results of his melancholia caused by these traumas. Freud states that melancholia brings about a "delusional expectation of punishment". Dodge's perturbation comes from his traumas and melancholia because not only does he carry the burden of ignominious act of incest and its trauma in the family, but also his infanticide. By killing Tilden's son, he causes another trauma in the family while he was longing to obliterate the stigma of this immoral child by demolishing him. It is obvious that Dodge maintains a gloomy life with these traumas. His state of mind affirms the traits of Freud's melancholia description:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment (Freud, 1917: 3042)

Because of the indifference to his surroundings, Dodge perceives himself as a useless man at home. When Halie threatens him by saying, "[i]f you tell this [family secret], you'll be dead to me", Dodge says "that won't be such a big change" (3.123). He

seems to have already accepted his incompetency and nonexistence in the family, so his presence is not much different from a dead body.



2.2 Heredity

Dodge's ineptness, which is always symbolized by the fruitlessness of the corn, becomes the cause of the curse on his family. The curse ongoing through fathers and sons in Shepard's plays also manifests itself in **Buried Child**. Dodge is known for his rudeness and violence. Besides killing the baby, his alcoholism exhibits his ferocious personality. Due to Dodge's effiteness, his sovereignty is not recognized by his sons, and he easily loses control of his leadership. Each man in the family is in the quest for power, therefore, it brings constant strife. The haunted sons who inherit the curse of their fathers end up personifying their father's image. None of the sons can succeed in forming an authentic identity, but they can only follow their father's pattern whereby they exist as Dodge's archetypes (Lee 23). All the children share the incompetence of their father either physically or psychologically. Bradley's one leg is amputated, and Tilden is described as 'mentally retarded' and in the need of care. Neither the father nor the sons are capable of taking responsibility for the family. Bradley is violent and vulgar like his father. He asserts that once he was the victim of violence in the family, but now says that it is time for revenge. It is time for him to despise his father and brother (2.107). Bradley humiliates Tilden and Dodge all the time. Moreover, his putting fingers into Shelly's mouth at the end of Act II is his most apparent manifestation of violence. Tilden is also prone to violence, and when he returns from New Mexico after a long time, Dodge says that he knows Tilden had trouble there. Opipari claims that "he committed a violent crime" (124) although it is not explicitly mentioned in the play.

The family's propensity for violence reveals itself in infanticide and desire for parricide which can be observed in the actions and intentions of the sons who inherited their violence from their father. Bradley's fierce behavior towards Dodge comes on to the scene when he mocks his father who is in a desperate situation coughing on the floor. When Shelly offers to help Dodge, Bradley answers: "We could shoot him. (laughs) We could drown him" (2.106)! His ease with mentioning parricide by ridicule is due to his lack of respect and affection. His wish for drowning is a kind of revenge for Dodge's infanticide as he also drowned the baby.

Likewise, in the end, Vince abandons his naïve character in Act Three and turns into a vulgar man. He leaves the house and after he comes back drunk, he begins to shout, break the bottles, and threaten everyone around him. Like Bradley, he also feigns being a murderer, by saying: “I am a murderer! Don’t underestimate me for a minute! I’m the Midnight Strangler! I devour whole families in a single gulp” (3.126)! As a result of being Tilden’s son and Dodge’s grandson, in the end, he discloses his inherited violence.



2.3 Uncanny

In the first part (**Curse of the Starving Class**) of this thesis, the relation between uncanny and castration anxiety was interpreted. In **Buried Child**, this anxiety shows itself again, but in an unexpected pattern which is observed not through the child but the father. This anxiety is experienced by the child when he is at the Phallic Stage which fundamentally plays the most significant role to prevent incestuous relationships. As the son is threatened with castration by his father, he leaves his incestuous desires for his mother when he perceives his father as an authority who would punish his immoral actions (Freud: 1921). However, in this play, as Dodge is not strong enough to provoke fear, he is unable to prevent the incestuous relation as well. As Diana Watt says, his attempts are futile:

Dodge dominates his sons in an abortive effort to protect himself, to avoid the vicious struggle for leadership between himself and his offspring, just as his son Bradley attempts the symbolic emasculation and displacement of his father in his repeated brutal haircuts. Even the gentle Tilden tries to symbolically bury his father with corn husks. (94)

In this family, the position of authority has interchanged causing the father to be afraid of his sons' punishment. The roles of the males are intertwined, and Dodge is the weak one, whereas his sons take control of their father as well as the home. Therefore, he is exposed to the emasculation of his sons throughout the play. For instance, Bradley cuts his hair while he is sleeping, and this symbolizes his castration. Dodge cannot trust his sons and is scared to be intruded on when he is unconscious. He says: "I don't wanna lay down for a while! Every time I lay down something happens! (whips off his cap, points at his head) Look what happens! That's what happens! [...] They'll steal your bottle! They'll cut your hair! They'll

murder your children” (2.93-94). The sons’ actions like Bradley’s cutting Dodge’s hair and Tilden’s covering his father with corns symbolize the rivalry between them and their father. Both brothers try to oust Dodge from power, so “[i]f, as it is later implied, that Tilden represents one aspect of the Oedipal impulse; the mother-seducer, then it is Bradley who represents the other aspect: namely, the father-slayer” (Taav 95-96).

Related to the castration anxiety, the implication of fertility is also dominant throughout the play. With the corn which does not properly grow in the garden, Dodge’s infertility is illuminated. While Dodge has not been able to grow corn there for years, Tilden can succeed, and it provides another example of Tilden’s superiority over his father. Tilden comes with “his arms loaded with fresh ears of corn” (1.68-69), while Dodge claims that “there hasn’t been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That’s the last time I planted corn out there” (1.69)! Nobody can believe there is corn in the yard because it stunningly appears with Tilden’s advent, which is also uncanny. Thanks to an old family photo in the bedroom, it is revealed that the yard and Dodge used to be fertile, and there was a bountiful harvest of fresh corn in the backyard once upon a time. Moreover, Dodge boasts about his productivity: ‘You know how many kids I’ve spawned? Not to mention Grand kids and Great Grand kids and Great Great Grand kids after them (3.112)? Notwithstanding the old bountiful and pleasant family portrait, now the backyard is the place where Dodge’s infertility is implied, and its possible result which is a family tragedy -a murdered child- caused by the incestuous relationship exists.

Another uncanny aspect appears in this play with Vince’s homecoming. Referring to the aforementioned description of ‘uncanny’ which is “the return of the repressed” (Freud, 1919: 3691), Vince’s return is a kind of rebirth of the buried child, and it exactly matches with Freud’s uncanny definition. Although the family, especially Dodge, wanted to repress this shameful secret by burying it in the yard, it appears again as a reflection of the repressed trauma which could not be resolved. The child that was once familiar to all the family members is attempted to be defamiliarized through forgetting. It is observed through the dialogues that this issue

is taboo and they never talk about it. The remembrance and admission of trauma can only occur thanks to Tilden's and Vince's arrival. With their homecoming, the repressed trauma revives.

Metaphorically speaking, the child is now preserved and disguised in the psyche as something unfamiliar. But the act of burial in the literal sense is supposed to bring about the elimination or removal of the buried object from the mind. Nonetheless, now that the subject preserves the object which he had intended to get rid of, he is faced with an uncanny condition in which the object associated with an unpleasurable memory becomes inseparable from the internalization of that object. (Güzel 35-36)

However Dodge refuses to recognize Vince, he finds his son familiar. Freud gives reference to Schelling to define uncanny which is "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (Freud, 1919: 3691). This definition clarifies the uncanniness in **Buried Child** as the entity they want to hide, inevitably comes out. Vince's return can be seen as the doppelgänger of the buried child. His arrival creates an uncanny atmosphere when Vince asserts that Dodge is his grandfather while on the other hand, Dodge says he does not know him. The buried child appears in two different ways: with Vince's arrival and with the corpse in Tilden's arms at the end of the play. Freud says that "re-animation of the dead [has] been represented as most uncanny themes" (Freud, 1919: 3696). However, in this situation, the buried child is not reborn, but coming out of a tomb is as canny as re-animation. As much as Vince, Tilden is also a representative of the trauma. When he comes back from New Mexico after twenty years, Dodge is not pleased with his presence because "Tilden's return arouses in Dodge a feeling of intimidation as he identifies Tilden with the buried child in the Freudian sense of the double" (Güzel 34). Both Tilden and Vince's return discloses the buried trauma.

Tilden assumes that he recognizes Vince. His sentence “I thought I saw a face inside his face” (2.100) illustrates that the past has become familiar to him when Tilden remembers what he repressed. The face inside a face represents the unforgotten and present. “The uncanny strikes us as somehow returning us to a past moment, but a past moment, which, while almost overwhelmingly (and certainly unsettlingly) familiar, nonetheless cannot be grasped or represented by conscious memory” (Gunning 83). As Vince asserts, they have not seen each other for only six years which is such a short time to forget someone’s face. Vince’s face has metaphorically changed because of being repressed, and it shows that being unrecognized does not occur in reality but in the psyche of the family members. In addition to Tilden’s realization of Vince’s alternate face, Vince also encounters his doppelgängers who are his ancestors. He says:

I could see myself in the windshield [...] I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy’s face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time [...]. And then his face changed. His face became his father’s face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his face changed to his Grandfather’s face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clean on back to faces I’d never seen before but still recognized. (3.130)

Similar to Weston who was dichotomizing himself into the position of witnessing and being witnessed in **Curse of the Starving Class**, Vince perceives himself as another person. In every different face, he finds something familiar. The more he encounters different faces, the more those faces acquaint himself with his roots. The faces in the mirror are peeled off layer by layer helping him trace both his and his ancestor’s past.

2.4 Repudiation and Obsession of the Past

Repressing the past is the only remedy for the family to ignore their traumas. Regardless of Vince's efforts to remind himself, the family members keep their ignorance of Vince's existence. Freud mentions the role of failure in remembering in his article "The Psychological Mechanism of Forgetfulness", and he says that the ease with which a single impression is recalled in memory is determined by the favorable or unfavorable attitude of a psychological force that declines to repeat something that would liberate displeasure (483). Dodge is aware that Vince's appearance will awaken unpleasurable memories and traumas with it. Therefore, his mind rejects the memory and continues to regard Vince as the non-existent buried child in the yard. All the family members, and most of all Dodge, refuse to remember the incidents and individuals that are related to the past. As Matthew Roudané notes "[t]he buried truths of the past, repressed through years of denial and subterfuge, are sources of disconnection in the family" (Roudané, 2002: 289). A family's endeavor to bury its past stems from an unconscious mechanism which was explained by Freud as the 'pleasure principle'. It helps one cope with the traumas by forgetting or repressing. He indicates that repression is a means of the pleasure principle whereby individuals use it as a mechanism to regard something external as unpleasurable so as to avoid it (Freud, 1911: 2553). Therefore, the family members prefer to deny recognizing Vince by defamiliarizing and externalizing him as if he never existed. Dodge's name itself is significant in terms of its literal meaning. According to the description in the Oxford Dictionary, it means "to avoid doing something, especially in a dishonest way". His name is compatible with his actions. He constantly dodges the past and especially his role as a father in the family. In his dialogue with Shelly about the old photographs, his rejection of the past is also observed.

SHELLY. Your whole life's up there hanging on the wall. Somebody who looks just like you. Somebody who looks just like you used to look.

DODGE. This isn't me! That never was me! This is me. Right here. This is it.

The whole shootin' match, sittin' right in front of you.

SHELLY. So the past never happened as far as you're concerned?

DODGE. The past? Jesus Christ! The past. What do you know about the past?

(3.111)

Dodge demonstrates that he has obfuscated the past, and he would like to live the present as if all those traumas were not experienced at all. The family's past is unveiled in this old photograph which also includes the buried child in Halie's arms and all the other children on the farm full of corn. Shelly sheds light on the baby's abomination saying "[Halie]'s looking down at the baby like it was somebody else's. Like it didn't even belong to her" (3.111). Even Halie herself has difficulty is bonding with her baby because it is a testament to her profligacy. The baby is neither accepted in the past nor in the present. However, it has always been imbedded in the subconscious of the family despite its physical absence.

Unlike the other family members who prefer to suppress the trauma, Halie has more of a tendency to remember the past. As Freud mentions in his "First Lecture" on psychoanalysis in 1909, mourning for a dead person for up to two years is normal, but more than this would cause hysteria and fixation on that trauma (2206). Because of her fixation with the past, Halie does not have difficulty remembering. She immediately recognizes Vince. The dialogue between Tilden and Dodge on the buried child reveals that everyone in the family except for Halie tends to forget the past.

DODGE. So what difference does it make? Everybody knows, everybody's forgot.

TILDEN. She hasn't forgot.

DODGE. She should've forgot.

TILDEN. It's different for a woman. She couldn't forget that. (1.78)

Diana Watt argues that indifference and failure to remember are hereditary, so all the male members of the family suffer from it. However, just like Ella in **Curse of the Starving Class**, Halie has not been poisoned with the curse either. Moreover, she does not avoid talking about the past and does not hide her mourning for her dead children. Other than the buried child, she also lost another son, Ansel, who she always idolizes by claiming that he was a hero and the smartest of the family.

The repressed past and traumas unfolding in the play are acted out unconsciously through the dialogues. The buried child is the principal trauma which is both hidden literally under the ground and allegorically under the conscious. Tilden's taking the corpse of the buried child out at the end of the play is the representation of disclosure of all the suppressions. As Nisa Güzel mentions in her thesis, this disclosure is enabled by several ways of acting-out that are observed thanks to the characters' actions and dialogues. Tilden's homecoming becomes the trigger to arise the trauma of the buried child as his absence abolishes the catalyst in remembrance. That he brings the corn from the backyard where the child is buried is a way of acting-out the trauma as well as a divulgence of the secret (67). With the aid of the corn, he reminds Dodge of the yard which has been disregarded until Tilden's arrival. When it comes to trauma, the thing which is not seen becomes the most apparent one with its power to remind itself permanently like Bradley's leg since "[t]he loss metonymically shifts to Bradley's prosthetic leg, every creaking sound of which echoes the loss" (Güzel 68). Dodge's anger for the non-existent child enfolds the whole atmosphere of the house, and he expresses his outrage against Tilden in Act Two by acting-out his hatred for the child.

The family members in **Buried Child**, cannot escape their past which constantly haunts them either with memories or with the figures such as Tilden and Vince who appear and turn the family upside down at the most unexpected times.

The cyclical pattern in the play makes the return of the past inevitable by unveiling and repeating it. Vince's arrival and the buried child's coming out of the tomb are like reflections of each other. While the buried child is the cause of the family trauma, Vince's appearance becomes the stimulus that evokes the repressed trauma. Heilman indicates that since Vince is a family member, he reminds the buried son's return. Shepard's cyclical pattern shows itself when the grandfather dies and the heir apparent takes charge (Heilman 683). Vince becomes the heir thereby enabling the family generation to continue which hints that the family's inevitable traumatic patterns would continue. At the end of Act Three, Vince inherits the house and upon the death of Dodge, takes his place on the sofa. "His body is in the same relationship to Dodge's" and "[his] arms folded behind his head, staring at the ceiling" (3.132). This scene takes the audience/reader back to Act One when Dodge is first shown at the same position; "the form of Dodge is made out, sitting on the couch [...] . Dodge slowly tilts his head back and stares at the ceiling" (1.63). Vince, a family member who once was not recognized, takes the lead in the house exactly like the repressed trauma, which was always neglected but always there at the center.

CHAPTER THREE

TRUE WEST

True West is the last play of Sam Shepard's family trilogy which premiered in 1980. The text handles the story of two brothers, Austin and Lee, who meet in their mother's house after many years, and the tension created by their deep strife. Due to their altogether discrepant characteristics, the strained atmosphere over the house intensifies gradually until the end of the play. Lee, the older brother, is an irresponsible, disagreeable, and lazy character. He robs the houses in his mother's neighborhood. On the other hand, Austin is ambitious and dedicated to his job script writing. While Austin is a guest at his mother's house and working to finish his screenplay, Lee who has lived in the desert for a long time shows up unexpectedly. Austin gets bothered with his brother's arrival as his order is disturbed. Throughout the play, the friction between them is sustained through their many dialogues and actions. Just after Austin gets the approval of film producer Saul Kimmer for his project, Lee surprisingly wins approval with his Western story. Kimmer decides to choose Lee's story and dismiss over Austin's. Kimmer's decision marks a turning point in both Lee and Austin's career thereby reversing their roles. Lee begins to have mastery over Austin, so Austin helps him write the script. As time goes on, they mirror each other, and their personalities intermingle. Austin begins to feel the desire for an unknown journey to the desert, whereas Lee tries to gain money and be successful with his screenplay. When they are about to track a new path in their lives, in the final scene their mother comes and encounters the quarrel between Austin and Lee about the movie script. The tension becomes so high that Austin chokes Lee with a telephone cord.

Like the other plays of the trilogy, this play focuses on a malfunctioning family along with an irresponsible father role model who puts his sons in a predicament with inner conflicts. The play is a tragedy in terms of its conflicts. As Aristotle suggests, tragedy achieves its ultimate purpose when tragic incidents occur among the family members. He denotes that: "Whenever the tragic deed, however, is done within the family--when murder or the like is done or meditated by brother on

brother, by son on father, by mother on son, or son on mother--these are the situations the poet should seek after” (Aristotle 14). In **True West**, Sam Shepard successfully achieves the tragedy with the denouement of the brothers’ choking scene. Furthermore, the ongoing suspension takes the quarrels between Lee and Austin to the point of tragedy. Although fratricide is foreshadowed at some points, it is not anticipated by the audience.

In the play, the quest for finding an identity merges with the myth of the American frontier that boosts hopes for better opportunities; therefore, the west, desert, and frontier are the main symbolic terrains of the play in terms of defining the characteristics of the family members. During the times when America was still expanding, the frontier meant aspiration for a new life. However, Sam Shepard debunks this myth in this play with the family who lives in Southern California situated on the West Coast, which is the furthest west of America, but still in a quest and cannot achieve their dreams. No matter how far west they go, they cannot achieve their dreams which effectively illustrates the pointlessness of the quest. The point Shepard demonstrates in the play is again the impossibility and disillusionment of the American Dream. As Wattenberg denotes, the dream of the frontier is imaginary as America in fact does not have a western frontier.

In an America lacking a western frontier, the conflict between "savagery" and "civilization" can only take place in the mind. The interaction and confrontation of the play's two "trapped" characters represent the conflict of contrary and inescapable elements of American consciousness - a conflict lying behind the apparently peaceful, suburban facade of American life. Rather than a realistic picture of modern suburban life, this play represents a slice of the modern American psyche. (Wattenberg 236)

It means that there is no line separating the East and West; civilized and savage; future dreams and past traumas. So, it is not possible to erase the past traumas of the country and begin a new life in the West by eclipsing their traumas. Indeed, there is no doorway to step towards acquiring the freedom or attaining a dream life. Therefore, the realm of the frontier is just an endless and unattainable quest as it is witnessed on full display which is kind of a representation of flawed American families of that era.

The setting of the play is the mother's neat kitchen which illustrates that her "world is apparently tame and ordered; there is no sign here of the freedom or wildness of the frontier West" (Wattenberg 234). It is given that their mother set off for Alaska and left her home in Austin's charge for a while. Besides writing his script in this house, Austin will also water his mother's plants thereby sustaining the order of the house. The younger brother Austin's neat appearance is compatible with this orderly kitchen, while the older brother Lee seems as if he belongs to another dimension with his filthy and scruffy clothes. The scene juxtaposes Austin with Lee by reflecting their contrasting garments and characteristics through their actions and attitude. While Austin is writing a script, Lee is drinking beer and disturbing him with his idle chatter. With the confidence of filling the authority gap in the house, Austin condescends to Lee. Lee gets bothered with his brother's attitude, and there is a constant dispute over every tiny thing. Throughout the play, the intensity of the argument goes between two extremes; at some points, it either decreases by reconciliation or increases by violence. Each brother embodies the diverse aspects of America which are wilderness and civilization. In the article named "**Sam Shepard's True West: A Fraternity Battle**" it is expressed that Lee, who is a vagabond, signifies the frontier myth; on the other hand, Austin stands for the civilized and developed West. (Mir, Vijaya 180)

The play consists of one-act which mostly demonstrates the dialogues between Austin and Lee, and all the scenes are in the kitchen. At first, Austin is the one being depicted as the superior figure having the power over Lee, but then an outsider, a Hollywood film producer Saul Kimmer, comes to the home and radically changes the balance of power. Lee wants to wander freely in the neighborhood to

steal things, so he constantly asks for Austin's car keys. Lee's persistence in taking Lee's car keys is his way of assuming control over the household. On the contrary, Austin resists vesting Lee with authority by handing over his car keys. The key has a symbolic role in terms of determining who is in power. "The keys move back and forth between the two characters, precisely indicating the shifts of power between them and alternately heightening and releasing the sense of enclosure" (Lesser 18). As a result of Kimmer's approval of Lee's script, Lee accedes the throne, and the interchange of power and identity between the brothers commences. After that moment, Lee enjoys the intellectual life while Austin starts to lose his orientation and wants to go to the desert.

3.1 The Absent Father

In this play, the father figure resembles Sam Shepard's father who was often absent from home when Shepard was a child. The father in **True West** never appears; nevertheless, he is omnipresent with his persistent reflection on the attitudes and dialogues of the brothers. He is known to live in the desert. He does not even have a name or a title as a father because the brothers call him "the old man". Rosefeldt remarks that "the name of the father which determines identity or subjectivity is somehow as absent as the father himself. Thus, that which is supposed to construct identity is itself ambiguous and vague" (291-92). The fact that the father does not have a name means the brothers refuse to attribute any title to their father while lacking an authoritative figure to identify with. Despite their refusal to acknowledge their father's existence, they continue following his path and are doomed to suffer the curse he left behind. The character Lee has a lifestyle resembling his father's, especially with his interest in the desert and wilderness. Lee and the 'old man' share a similar point of view; on the other hand, Austin chooses a life opposite to those of his brother and father. By refusing to follow his father's path, he tries to avoid his curse of the infinite quest for meaning. He has a settled and steady life, so he seems to have found meaning in his life by writing. He is determined and rational, unlike his father and brother. The absence of a father figure puts a burden on at least one of the sons and he plays the role of 'surrogate father'. The son takes the responsibility of other family members, and in this case, it is Austin who becomes the authority figure as he takes care of his mother's plants, supervises his brother, and even helps his father by sending money.

As Sigmund Freud explains in "Totem and Taboo", the sons killed their father so that they abolish the patriarchy and take control over the family in the primitive tribes (Totem 2782). However, the murder brings remorse when none of them could succeed the role of the father, and consequently identification with the father occurs. "What had up to then been prevented by his actual existence was thenceforward prohibited by the sons themselves, in accordance with the psychological procedure so familiar to us in psycho-analyses under the name of

‘deferred obedience’” (Totem 2783). Austin and Lee, like the sons in primitive tribes, cannot help but obey their father’s rules thereby ending up in his place in the end. The repetitive cycle of the curse haunts them. Therefore, the old man is not absent in their lives, but he still preserves his power and presence like the murdered father.

According to Jan Cook, Freud shows how the murder of the father brings the father to life: “Rather than dissolving his power, death magnifies and perpetuates it. His death in nature produces his life in culture as symbol (a totem god), as source of the law and as the subject of a seemingly unresolvable ambivalence, oscillating between hatred and veneration, identification with the father and rejection of him” (143). In other words, the sacrificed father becomes the absent father standing behind culture and the law, a father that not only promotes identification but establishes an ambivalent relationship between himself and his progeny. (Rosefeldt 14)

The absence of the father gives an ambivalent and ephemeral authority to Austin and Lee which causes a rivalry between them. Although Austin refuses to resemble his father, he nonetheless identifies with him at the end of the play with his desire for the desert, and he inevitably follows the pattern of rejection and identification successively. The fact that the father is never seen throughout the play induces the sons Austin and Lee to form their own personalities although they cannot get rid of their father’s shadow who is errant and irresponsible. Both of the brothers are longing to get reunited with the old man in the desert. Lee was already on his way to visit his father when he first dropped by, and Austin wants to meet him at the end as well. Güzel interprets this situation according to the Freudian terms by saying: “[t]he absent father in **True West** is regarded as the ego ideal by Austin and Lee” (24) because the father has the function of influencing their judgments, and he is the one

whom they transform into sooner or later. Austin's feigned thankfulness and fascination for nature remind Lee their father.

LEE. You sound just like the old man now.

AUSTIN. Yeah, well we all sound alike when we're sloshed. We just sorta' echo each other. (1.7.42)

Both brothers become the image of their father particularly when they are "sloshed". Their unconscious state releases their suppressed identities that embody the old man's traits.

Austin tells a story of his father to show that the old man's attempt at abandoning everything is futile. He says: "Nobody can disappear. The old man tried that. Look where it got him. He lost his teeth" (1.7.43). The story proves that the more he tries to disappear, the more tracks on the trail he leaves which marks his existence. Penniless, he lost his teeth in the middle of Arizona, and it shows the level of his despair. By hitchhiking, he went to a dentist on the Mexican border. So, he does not find the remedy in the frontier after all. "Eight days in the rain and the sun and every day he's droppin' teeth on the blacktop and nobody'll pick him up 'cause his mouth's full a' blood" (1.7.44). By dropping his teeth on the way to Mexico every day, he left tracks in different places on the road. Watt claims, "he is decaying physically and spiritually" (Watt 234). While the paternal figure is expected to look after his family, the father becomes a figure in need making his children take the responsibility and watch over him. Lee is more optimistic about his father's redemption. He offers Austin to "bring him back out here. Get him settled down some place" (1.7.42), but Austin declines his offer saying that he had tried to help him to go out of the trouble and his attempt was unsuccessful. Austin gives up trying to alter his father's habits thus choosing to identify with him.

3.2 Rivalry

As previously explained, Freud claims the vacancy of patriarchy results in a rivalry between the brothers. “They fight in order to win a victory and to reach the position of their father earlier than the opponent. This seems to symbolize the battle between two brothers in order to decide the winner who can reach the same level as their father and take the place of him” (Morimoto 130). The relationship between Austin and Lee epitomizes this strife because the battle of sovereignty perpetuates its tension throughout the play. The rivalry comes out by means of their drive of dominance on various issues. For instance, they continually compete for the prize of the best son in the eyes of their parents, such as being the one to help their father the most;

AUSTIN: I was down there too, you know.

LEE: What d'ya' want, an award? You want some kinda' medal? You were down there. He told me all about you. (1.1.4)

As John Clum denotes, “[t]he father wanders drunkenly through the desert and border towns, losing his teeth in a bag of Chinese food. Yet this absent father is still an object of sibling rivalry for brothers Austin and Lee” (181). Furthermore, they envy each other for taking responsibility for their mother’s plants. Lee implies that watering the plants is not an exclusive task saying: “She might’ve just as easily asked me to take care of her place as you” (1.1.5). Jealousy underlies their taunting each other. In the first scenes, they debase each other; however they then confess that both of them would like to live the other’s life. Their relentless attack on each other is due to the strong craving to satisfy their compulsion that is suppressed. Lee goes into writing a script and thanks to Saul Kimmer’s approval of his screenplay, he succeeds

in superseding Austin whereby Austin adopts Lee's role by relinquishing his immaculate life and begins robbing houses.

Lee's instincts, in other words, the id leads his choices. He has an impulsive, feverish, and violent character as the pleasure principle far outweighs his rational thinking. That is the reason he immediately gets angry at the times he cannot satisfy his needs. On the other hand, Austin behaves in line with social norms, his ego, and reality principle although he cannot sustain it until the end of the play. Finally, he surrenders to his id with his attempt to kill his brother. The brothers' unsuccessful morality mechanism stems from their dysfunctional father. Freud emphasizes the significance of the father in determining the child's traits as it is the father who plays a preeminent role in forming the child's super-ego. He says: "[I]t is the authority of the child's parents - essentially, that of his autocratic father, threatening him with his power to punish - which calls on him for a renunciation of instinct and which decides for him what is to be allowed and what forbidden" (Freud, 1938: 4938). The void of a paternal authority constitutes an impediment to the development of the super-ego. The effects of it are noticed firstly in Lee's actions, then in Austin's when he models Lee's behaviour. Lee's super-ego does not regulate his actions and is not strong enough to prevent his tendency toward crime such as theft. Also, he creates the impression that he could even kill his brother when they fight over the screenplay. He asserts that family members and brothers are the ones who kill each other the most. He justifies it by claiming that a specific season of the year provokes brothers to kill each other. It is a kind of nature's temptation that people cannot resist, and so they satisfy the drive of their "ids". Austin renounces his claims and states: "We're not insane. We're not driven to acts of violence like that. Not over a dumb movie script" (1.4.26). On the other hand, Lee responds: "Maybe we're too intelligent, huh" (1.4.26)? Austin's "rationality principle" clashes with Lee's "pleasure principle". Lee mocks Austin for disregarding the killing instinct because Lee would probably not suppress this instinct as would any wild animal that acted with its instinct and not avoid killing its prey. Austin, whose actions are in accordance with the ethical norms, reason, and intelligence, condemns this idea. Therefore, Lee firmly

believes they are too intelligent as human beings to follow their ids as their rationality principle prevents it.

René Girard's definition of "mimetic desire" can be applied to the case of the contentiousness between Austin and Lee. Mimetic desire defines the state of jealousy between the rivals and expresses the notion that the rivals desire what the other possess. He uses the words "vaniteux" for the person who desires and "mediator" for the rival (Deceit, Desire 6). In the situation of Austin and Lee, the vaniteux and mediator interchange throughout the play as both see each other as a rival. Notwithstanding their criticism of each other, they want to obtain what the other has. Lee confesses his jealousy by saying: "[...] I always wondered what'd be like to be you[...] . I used to picture you walkin' around some campus with yer arms fulla' books" (1.4.28). Likewise, Austin emulates Lee's adventurous lifestyle. He says: "I used to say to myself, 'Lee's got the right idea. He's out there in the world and here I am. What am I doing'" (1.4.28)? He realizes that having a family and a university degree does not constitute his ideal identity as he has a hidden yearning for adventure. He satisfies this yearning by imitating Lee's life by stealing toasters and planning a desert adventure. The things they originally scoffed at become what they desire then. At some points, their desires overlap when they simultaneously desire the same things, which can be observed over their battles with the screenplay. Once, Lee was the "vaniteux" and Austin the "mediator" because of his success and esteem; however, when Lee's screenplay attracts Saul Kimmer, these roles switch. Girard denotes that this kind of rivalry tends to occur more if the rivals are closely related to each other.

Girard calls the situation in which the desires of the subject and the mediator intersect as "internal mediation" (1.2.9), and he mentions that this mediation, in other words, rivalry, is more frequent among the nucleus family members like father-son or brother-brother (1.7.43). When Austin wants to keep the idea for the screenplay himself and not to share it with his brother, Lee points at the rivalry between close family members: "Fraid I'll steal it huh? Competition's gettin' kinda' close to home isn't it" (1.5.33)? The fact that internal mediation is mostly observed between father-son or brother-brother relations explains the prevalence of fratricide in myths,

religions, and societies. The story of Cain and Abel in the Old Testament is accepted to be the first example of fratricide. Jealousy engendered the first fratricide on earth when Cain murdered his brother because his sacrifice was rejected by God while Abel's sacrifice was accepted. The reason which impels Austin to kill Lee by strangulation in the play is similar to Cain's proposition. Austin envies Lee due to his success with the screenplay, and the tension between them reaches its climax with Kimmer's rejection of Austin's script. Kimmer's choice increases the rivalry between the brothers as he empowers Lee and discredits Austin with his appraisal. "A frequent motif in the Old Testament, as well as in Greek myth, is that of brothers at odds with one another. Their fatal penchant for violence can only be diverted by the intervention of a third party, the sacrificial victim or victims" (Girard 4). The third party is Austin and Lee's mother, yet she does not interfere in the fight and cannot reverse the violence.

3.3 Doppelgänger and Dichotomy

Lee and Austin are two contradictory characters due to their representation of the other's disclosed desire and personality. When Lee and Austin completely reverse their identities, they switch roles and transform into each other. Austin is like the other facet of Lee, and so is Lee. In other words, they are doppelgängers reflecting one another. Their divergent personas are shown via their dialogues and conflicts throughout the play. At first, the play mainly focuses on the juxtaposition between these two characters. However, the dichotomy is not only observed between these two brothers, but also in their transformation throughout the play. Lee denotes that "Austin and Lee acting as alter egos to each other before finally reversing roles" (Lee 18). In other words, while they are each other's alter egos at first, they embody their alter egos in their own personalities in the end, thereby transforming into their own alter egos. As a result of mimetic desire, they yearn and finally obtain what the other has. The characterization of them emulating each other's doppelgänger results at the end of the play, in each other transforming into the other's character. "The 'return of the repressed' which, according to Freud, is one of the characteristics of the Doppelgänger, may then be paraphrased as the 'return of the negation'". These are the confrontations, in consciousness of what the unconscious cannot deny" (Vardoulakis 101,102). This interpretation defines Austin and Lee since they have evolved into what they had previously mocked and rejected in each other's persona. It was a rejection caused by jealousy and its repression. When the disclosure of that repression is inevitable, they not only obtain the other's goals but also his personal traits. Lee tells Austin that: "I'll just turn myself right inside out. I could be just like you then, huh?" (1.4.27). It illustrates that his opposite or suppressed self is Austin's counterpart because he is what Lee is not. "It is as though the *doppelgänger* embodies a lurid, frightening side of the protagonist's own personality—a facet of the personality which has been repressed and now seeks to resurface in an outward form" (Lee 250). Furthermore, their metamorphosis ultimately coincides with their father because they are each other's doppelgängers as much as their father's. Both sons are the reflections of the "old man". Initially, Lee is the double of his father. He

is on the way to visit him to complete his identification process; however, he encounters Austin beforehand. Instead of identifying with his father, he diverts into his brother's path.

The duality and dichotomy are not just presented in Austin and Lee's personalities but also in the main theme of the play. There is an incessant juxtaposition between civilization and savagery; order and chaos; suburbs and desert; success and failure; moral and immoral. The title itself implies the ambiguousness that there is the West; in addition, there is a **True West**. "There is no clear answer for which one is the true West. Symbolically, these two different western locals represent the conflicting ideals of masculinity that the family myth expects American men to consolidate. (Mir, Vijaya 178). The west or frontier represented by Lee is the symbol of being an unexplored and savage land that is far away from the civilization and conformity of the United States. Austin represents order and civilization, whereas Lee represents courage, both of which are the quintessential characteristics of an American man. However, it is seen that Austin and Lee cannot retain both. When they obtain one of the conflicting paradigms, they need to abandon the other, so they can never accomplish the ideal family man image.

Austin and Lee's transforming characters are depicted with their changing positions on the stage. In the opening scene, Austin comes to light being busy with his writing. The setting is: "Night. Sound of crickets in dark. Candlelight appears in alcove, illuminating AUSTIN, seated at glass table hunched over a writing notebook [...] typewriter on table, stacks of paper, candle burning on table. Soft moonlight fills kitchen illuminating LEE, beer in hand [...]" (1.1.2). In the seventh scene, Lee switches his place on the typewriter with Austin: "Night. Coyotes, crickets, sound of typewriter in dark, candlelight up on LEE at typewriter struggling to type with one finger system, AUSTIN sits sprawled out on kitchen floor with whiskey bottle, drunk" (1.7.38). The setting and the sounds of the crickets do not change showing that nothing has altered except for the exchange of status between Austin and Lee. Austin suggests an idea to Lee for the new scenario, and his idea is that "[Saul] thinks we're the same person [...] . He's lost his mind. Poor old Saul. (*giggles*) Thinks we're one and the same" (1.7.39). He mocks it by disregarding their metamorphosis

into each other; on the other hand, he foreshadows that they are doppelgängers. Shepard emphasized his conscious theme of duality in the play by saying: "I wanted to write a play about double nature...one that wouldn't be symbolic or metaphorical or any of that stuff. I just wanted to give a taste of what it feels like to be two-sided. It's a real thing, double nature. I think we're split in a much more devastating way than psychology can ever reveal." (qtd. Shewey 141). The play goes back and forth between the dualities and distinctive traits of the brothers. Lee and Austin's choices are limited with double options because either they would continue following their own path or choose the other's. Nevertheless, "Lee, who is a double of the father, will become the father's custodian. In this deal, Lee will win out over Austin and redeem the father" (Rosefeldt 118).

3.4 Heredity

Austin and Lee cannot detach from their father, so they quest after their identity in his shadow. Heredity precludes them from breaking their bonds. Despite his endeavor to create an identity at odds with his father, Austin eventually feels the need to identify with his father. His writing by candlelight in the first scene foreshadows that he will do what his ancestors had done. When Lee asks him whether he always writes by the candlelight, he answers:

AUSTIN. (*puts pen down, rubs his eyes*) Yeah. Sometimes it's soothing.

LEE. Isn't that what the old guys did?

AUSTIN. What old guys?

LEE. The Forefathers. You know.

AUSTIN. Forefathers?

LEE. Isn't that what they did? Candlelight burning into the night? Cabins in the wilderness (1.1.3)

Writing is Austin's means of putting down roots in his life. He has a wife and children to care for. Although he has left his family for a while, by taking responsibility and earning some money he at least assumes the role of a family patriarch that is antithetical to his father's role. However, even while he is trying to divert from his father's path, he is doing it under his shadow, using candlelight. Writing in his father's metaphorical presence calms him by taking him away from the reality of life. The more he tries to differ from his father by not being idle and having a purpose in life thanks to writing, the more he epitomizes his father. "Like Vince, Austin begins the play as a typical, dutiful son, somehow passive, but by the

end of the play, both Austin and Vince have transformed into violent aggressors and their transformation has been marked by drunkenness and an imitation of the behavior patterns of the 'fallen' father" (Kadhem 196-197). While Austin is transforming into Lee, he also goes back to his roots by imitating his father.

The sons are disoriented and unable to lead a proper life because of their parents' indifference. Like the old man, their mother seems uncaring as well. "Although **True West** focuses on the love/hate relationship of two brothers, the children of an apparently broken marriage, their parents significantly influence the play's action. The two brothers, Lee and Austin, clearly inherit certain traits, attitudes, and problems from their parents" (Wattenberg 233). The mother's indifference to Austin and Lee's murderous fight in the last scene displays her apathy. Their parents are the cause of Austin and Lee's lapses in their lives, and Wattenberg emphasizes the iniquitous role of the parents in **True West**:

The two brothers, Lee and Austin, clearly inherit certain traits, attitudes, and problems from their parents. Moreover, these parents, who in some ways represent a generic mother and father (being referred to in the script as "Mom" and the "Old Man") [...] - as representing the failure of the marriage of civilization and savagery. In fact, Mom and the Old Man represent two systems of value so opposed that no real relationship between them is conceivable. (Wattenberg 233)

Austin and Lee are doomed to choose one of their parents' convictions which is either the ordered, civilized, and the suburban lifestyle of their mother; or the itinerant and savage life of the father in the desert. Both brothers are trapped in the dichotomy of their parents' lives. As a matter of fact, what they keep searching is the authenticity to become more familiar with their quandary. The lack of an identifiable figure in the family, who is expected to the father according to Freud, generates the

need for identifying with something else that for Austin is the local streets and neighborhood and for Lee his mother's antique plates. In the last two scenes, this impulse is brought to light by their dialogues. Austin is in desperate need of going to the desert because of his despondency over disengagement. Lee is surprised at Austin's desire for the desert believing that he is not designed for that savage lifestyle as he has grown accustomed to his mother's civilized world. Nevertheless, Austin feels the need for identification with his father by following his route when he realizes that he has already lost his contact with what he supposes to be familiar and recognizable.

AUSTIN[...] .There's nothin' 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 comin' down here thinkin' it's the fifties or somethin'. I keep finding myself getting off the freeway at familiar landmarks that turn out to be unfamiliar. On the way to appointments. Wandering down streets I thought I recognized that turn out to be replicas of streets I remember. Streets I misremember. Streets I can't tell if I lived on or saw in a postcard. Fields that don't even exist anymore. (1.8.51)

He does not feel that he belongs to those familiar places anymore. As a son, he is destined to go after his father and follow his path which eventually turns out to be the obscurity of the desert. Likewise, Lee would like to take familiar objects with him on his journey to the desert to remind him of his roots. He conjoins the contradicting elements of savagery and civilization by taking his mother's bone china plates to the desert. He expresses his need in being in touch in these words: "I'm tired of eatin' outa' my bare hands, ya' know. It's not civilized [...] It's not the same. Plastic's not the same at all. What I need is somethin' authentic. Somethin' to keep me in touch. It's easy to get outa' touch out there" (1.9.60). They are craving for authenticity and

identification whose only way to fulfillment is through their ancestors' well trodden path and intimate possessions.



CHAPTER 4

FOOL FOR LOVE

This play is one of Sam Shepard's family quintet. For some critics, Shepard's family plays consist of three plays, which were analyzed in the previous chapters; on the other hand, some critics claim that **Fool for Love** and **Lie of the Mind** are included in the family plays. In terms of the father-son relationship and its psychological effects on the family and specifically the son, **Fool for Love** draws a parallel with the other plays analyzed in this thesis. The play was first shown in 1983 at the Magic Theatre. The toxic relationship between the two lovers, May and Eddie, is a replica of their father and mothers. May and Eddie are siblings who have the same father but different mothers. Thanks to the story told by Eddie, the background is unfolded towards the end of the play. May's mother is the substitute lady of The Old Man (Eddie and May's father), and The Old Man once visits her with Eddie. May and Eddie see each other for the first time there when they are teenagers. Unaware of being siblings, they immediately fall in love. From then on, they have an inconsistent relationship which they break up and make up. The play opens with May on the scene in a filthy motel room, and it shows the problematic structure of this relationship and the traumatic influence on its sufferers. Eddie comes to visit May claiming that he missed her, and this visit starts the repetitive toxic relationship cycle ongoing throughout the play. In this scene, The Old man sits in a chair in the darkness. He is illuminated by a spotlight only while he is communicating with May and Eddie. A man named Martin comes to the motel room, but he can neither hear nor see The Old Man. Martin has the role of being an outsider who helps unfold the story. He is an element to enable May and Eddie to speak about their repressed past. Thanks to this unveiling, it is learned that Eddie's mother killed May's with a shotgun, so both children have traumatic memories of their past. At the end of the play, right after May and Eddie come together again, Eddie leaves her for a mistress resuming the endless loop.

4.1 Repetition Compulsion and Trauma

The motel room has a gloomy atmosphere surrounded by faded-colored walls. “Yellow-orange light from a street lamp shines through” (1.7), and the furniture is also yellow. The yellow color which is emphasized in the opening part puts the audience in despair. “The predominance of yellow seems to suggest a starkness, like a peeling away of artifice or an exposing to light of the secrets which the lovers have repressed for so long” (Lee 277). That light gives a clue that the hidden traumas and memories will be brought into light slowly. Besides yellow, the other dominant color is black on the stage. All the elements belonging to The Old Man are black which symbolizes his shameful past, ineffectiveness, and non-existence in his children’s lives. Neither Eddie nor May was born into an ideal American Dream family. What both of them had experienced in their lives was the absence of a father figure who was present in their lives once in a blue moon. In addition to his absence, his concurrent affair with two women gave a rise to traumatic childhood for his children. Since May and Eddie fell in love with each other and learned that they were half-siblings with the same father, they have had a pact to conceal it like in **Buried Child**. It is a pact of forgetting and repressing the trauma of their incestuous relationship. The malfunctioning adulterous relationship of their ancestor gives birth to another trauma in May and Eddie. As they had not known each other until after they encountered at the house of May’s mother, they were unaware that they had a sibling. Therefore, when they fell in love at first sight, they did not know that their love would be incestuous.

May and Eddie’s deleterious relationship captivates them in their familial traumatic cycle. They are in an endless loop in which they can neither leave nor have a steady relationship. May describes her despair in these words: “Suckered me into some dumb little fantasy and then dropped me like a hot rock. How many times has that happened” (1.12)? In addition, by dint of the frequent use of the word “again” throughout the play, the repetitiveness of the actions is emphasized. Many times, May slams the door while she is arguing with Eddie. When she claims that she does not want to continue this relationship anymore, she slams the door, but after a short time, she always opens it and comes back again. “Eddie keeps re-entering the motel

room moments after he leaves, and May keeps re-emerging from the bathroom, so these types of 'returns' parallel the return of memories and the recovery of truth" (Lee 282). Continuous abrupt door slamming symbolizes their repetitive unsteady relationship which begins and ends hysterically. Due to their repression of the past and inability to face and solve their traumas, they keep acting out their traumas. Eddie repeats the curse of his father's mischievousness in his own relationship with May by cheating on her with the Countess. "[...] Eddie[...] alternately desert and return to the women in their lives, acting out their conflicted desire for independence and their absolute need for contact with a woman to consolidate their self-images" (McDonough, 1995: 67). May tells Eddie that: "You do nothing but repeat yourself. That's all you do. You just go in a big circle" (1.35). They are unconsciously in a compulsion to repeat. Not only do they repeat the hereditary curse, but they keep pursuing their unsuccessful relationship.

Eddie repeatedly abandons May and then comes back. His continuous arriving and leaving remind his father's pattern in which "[h]e kept disappearing and re-appearing. For years that went on" (1.33). The Old Man's curse on Eddie and Weston's curse on Wesley are alike in terms of both sons' being doomed to their ancestral fate. In both of the plays,

the fallen father exists as a kind of metaphorical "ghost," and the haunted sons' attempts to repress traumatic memories of the fathers' malevolence are ultimately futile. Following the same gothic formula established in the earlier family plays, the haunted son is doomed to remember and to repeat the mistakes of his father. In this way, the past is never past, and repressed memories return to find a new life of their own. (Lee 248)

Despite Eddie and May's reluctance to remember the past, The Old Man, as a figure representing the past, causes the familial traumas to be unveiled. He is positioned in

darkness on stage, and he is spotlighted only when he is speaking. “On stage, the continuous appearance of a silent father, sitting in a chair, stage forward, emphasizes the psychological impact of the father’s past actions on his hapless children” (King, “Sam Shepard and the cinema” 220). He stands for the past itself with his ghost-like presence because the past does not prevail either, yet it still exists in the consciousness serving as a gothic device in the play. Similarly, The Old Man is present in Eddie and May’s minds as no one else can hear him speaking. He is also like an analyst who makes Eddie and May undergo psychoanalysis by shedding light on their repressed past, and he forces them to recall their past. On the other hand, Eddie is like an analysand who rejects remembering but instead acts out. “The past frequently rushes upon the protagonist of modern drama as it does upon the analysand. While Freud was developing key concepts such as the idea that suppressed memories cause the repetition of neurotic behavior or that neurotics construct false memories to screen a traumatic event” (Favorini 6). The stage, which bears resemblance to the psychoanalytic treatment couch, enables Eddie to act out all his childhood traumas in his relationship with May. He transmits the traumas caused by his father into his actions.

The Old Man is indifferent to the traumas he caused in his wife, mistress, and children’s lives. The impact of those traumas for him is not as dreadful as it is for the children because he either forgot or did not witness. He acknowledges that forgetting is the best thing he did: “I can’t even remember the original circumstances. Been so long. Probably a lot a’ things I forgot. Good thing I got out when I did though. Best thing I ever did” (1.25). Thanks to his self-defensive reaction, he could accomplish avoiding the traumatic incidents by forgetting, unlike Eddie and May. When Eddie’s mother killed May’s with his shotgun, he was not there so he did not witness that trauma. Also, he claims that he did not know about this suicide before:

THE OLD MAN. Nobody told me any a’ that. I was left completely in the dark. EDDIE. You were gone. (1.38)

None of the family members recalls the past in the same way as they either unconsciously forgot it by following the pleasure principle or consciously distort it. “Eddie, Mae, and the Old Man each voice their own interpretations of the past, offering variants on what may or may not have occurred” (Roudané, 2000: 354). Eddie and The Old Man seem like they were keeping a secret from May regarding their past; however, it turns out that the father is also oblivious to what May and Eddie know. According to Sigmund Freud, forgetting and misremembering are conscious reactions given to the traumas to suppress them (Freud: 1914).

4.2 Heredity

May and Eddie have been affected by the destructive traumas caused by their parents since children can't break off their past. Sam Shepard points out the significance of familial roots and destiny on the next generations in these words:

You have this personality, and somehow you feel locked into it, jailed by all of your cultural influences and your psychological ones from your family, and all that. And somehow I feel that isn't the whole of it, you know, that there's another possibility [...] but you can't escape, that's the whole thing, you can't [...] but there is always that impulse toward another kind of world, something that doesn't necessarily confine you in that way. (qtd. in Butters 86-87)

In Shepard's haunted son characters, the inevitability of escaping fates is observed. The things parents have gone through sow the seeds of their descendants' fate. The parental impact on Eddie and May that enmeshes them in their inescapable fate is depicted in this play. As Freud mentions in his article named "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego": "A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father; he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere. We may say simply that he takes his father as his ideal" (3797). In the light of this argument, Eddie's cowboy-like clothing style and tendency to alcoholism and violence acquires a meaning, as they are also The Old Man's habits and behaviors. Like all the other sons in the afore-analyzed plays, Eddie imitates his father, and also he has inherited his father's traits. Both in his appearance, characteristics, and relationship with women, he resembles his father. Likewise, his inability to abandon or get attached to a woman, his oscillating feelings and attitude towards May are the duplication of The Old Man's relationship swinging between Eddie and May's mothers. "In realizing that he still loves May but feels compelled to pursue his new passion for the

Countess, Eddie is confronting his “male” heritage from the Old Man” (Murphy 134). He cannot sustain a healthy relationship as he can neither leave May nor commit himself to the relationship which results in an endless cycle. Both The Old Man and Eddie are prone to infidelity and affairs. He is entrapped in his father’s fate and has no other choice but to repeat what he observed in his father during his childhood. Eddie and May’s toxic relationship is also preordained to keep its endless cycle because of their sibling bond. Eddie tells May that: “We’ll always be connected. That was decided a long time ago” (1.17). Their future had already been determined by their father and thus they become entangled in the same inevitable familial cycle.

The Old Man is not the only one who transmits his traumas to his children. May’s mother handed down her traumas of betrayal to her daughter as well because “[a] traumatic event may affect an individual not only at a biological level but also at the level of his or her succeeding generations” (Godley 9). Parents having experienced traumas transmit them to their children as traumas are also intergenerational. May’s mother had the trauma of being cheated on and sharing her husband with another woman. May has been haunted by her mother’s misfortune; therefore, she imitates her mother’s fault and folly in her relationships. Falling in love with Eddie and then learning that it is a forbidden relationship makes her sick; however, she cannot resist loving, and she persists in being together with him. Her mother who knows the disappointment of unrequited love warns her daughter so that she does not repeat the same mistakes. When May meets the feeling of disenchantment upon learning that her love is forbidden, she remembers her mother’s familiarity with grief: “But my mother- my mother knew exactly what was wrong. She knew it clear down to her bones. She recognized every symptom. And she begged me not to see him but I wouldn't listen” (1.37). Although her mother begged her, she was not able to alter May’s tendency for the compulsion to repeat her traumas. She admits that until she experienced it herself, she was not conscious of her mother’s deep sorrow; “I kept watching her grieve, as though somebody'd died. She'd pull herself up into a ball and just stare at the floor. And I couldn't understand that because I was feeling the exact opposite feeling. I was in love, see” (1.37). Only

after she becomes a substitute ladylove and suffers from love does she empathize with her mother. Her posture in the opening scene displays a similar one to her mother's. "May sits on edge of bed facing audience, feet on floor, legs apart, elbows on knees, hands hanging limp and crossed between her knees, head hanging forward, face staring at the floor"(1.8). Her fetal position implies that she needs affection and protection to keep herself from the hazard of the outer world, namely Eddie. Both children go through their parents' problems, so May and Eddie's problematic relationship is the reflection of their parents' unsuccessful bonding.

The Old Man's shadow-like presence in the play strengthens the perception of his ineffectual parenting for his children. "[This play] explore[s] how a son's relationship with women is profoundly affected by his relationship with his father, from whom the son has derived a precarious and violent concept of identity" (McDonough, 1995: 72). Not having a strong father figure influences Eddie's lifelong decisions. This play epitomizes the significant role of the father which also was highlighted by Freud in psychoanalysis. A study analyzes the sons' character development with different father role models. According to this study, "Adolescents were divided into two groups: those having a "good" functioning father, and those having a "bad" father (e.g., addicted to alcohol). Results indicated that adolescents with a "good" father had a significantly more positive image of God than did adolescents with a "bad" father" (Krenke and Shulman 48). The influence of fathers on their sons is incontrovertible as it is observed through Eddie. His immoral actions such as incest, cheating, and violence are the results of The Old Man's dysfunction.

4.3 Incest / Super-ego

Prohibiting incestuous relationships is a function of super-ego in terms of preventing the unethical instincts triggered by the id. It is seen that Eddie and May's super-egos do not function properly as they succumb to their desire for love despite being incestuous. As it is unintentional at the beginning, the incestuous relationship in **Fool for Love** is different from the affair of Tilden and Halie in **Buried Child**. Eddie and May's relation is similar to the myth of Oedipus. According to Aristotle's tragedy rules mentioned in *The Poetics*, the most successfully created tragedy is "for the deed to be done in ignorance, and the relationship discovered afterwards" (14). In this play, tragedy reveals itself as the siblings fall in love being ignorant of their kinship. However, they insistently maintain this relationship although they are aware that it is incestuous. To prevent it, the super-ego is needed. Freud explains the role of the super-ego as follows: "In the course of an individual's development a portion of the inhibiting forces in the external world are internalized and an agency is constructed in the ego which confronts the rest of the ego in an observing, criticizing and prohibiting sense" (Freud, 1938: 4936). The Old Man undertakes the role of super-ego, albeit in a lagging manner, with his interference in May and Eddie's dialogues. He observes them throughout the whole play and finally wants to prohibit their intimacy at the end of the play. He warns them saying: "Stay away from her! What the hell are you doin'! Keep away from her! You two can't come together" (1.39)! May and Eddie's malfunctioning super-egos lead to an immoral relationship in which they violate society's rules. Their inability to abide by society's norms is due to the absence of paternal authority in their childhood. Therefore, The Old Man's delayed authorization does not prohibit his children's relationship, and it is demonstrated by May and Eddie's hugging each other neglecting The Old Man talking next to them. He could not help his children develop their super-egos, so he becomes the super-ego itself by trying to stop them.

4.4 Uncanny

Throughout the play, plenty of uncanny elements are used to create phantom reality. The ghost-like existence of The Old Man obfuscates the reader and the audience. His presence is uncanny only for the reader and the audience because they are the ones who can comprehend this ghost-like presence. For Eddie and May, the father is there; on the other hand, for an outsider like Martin, he is absent. Therefore, the duality of his existence and absence is just shown to the audience. “Shepard also uses the technique of ‘reviving’ the dead father in **Fool for Love** where the father sits in a chair throughout the action of the play and comments on his children’s acts and statements, but remains an inactive observer and reviewer of the unfolding story” (Prohászka 52n9). It is uncanny that he comes to life and talks to his children although he is a dead figure. Revival is one of the uncanny elements mentioned in Freud’s “The ‘Uncanny’” in which the example of a carved crocodile figure on a table coming alive is given. As Lee remarks, “The Old Man’s existence is uncanny in its duality, existing as he does at once both in reality and in the imagination [...] he also serves as an embodiment of their own guilty consciences and the return of their repressed traumatic memories” (Lee 279). The ghost-like presence of the father is not different from what May and Eddie experienced in their childhood which means they are familiar with his nonexistence.

Another uncanniness occurs by experiencing *déjà vu*. It occurs when people feel that they had experienced the same moment before. As if they had lived that moment, seen that person, or felt that emotion that is familiar to them at present. An uncanny occurrence in the play comes to light when Eddie says: “It was like we knew each other from somewhere but we couldn’t place where” (1.34). This feeling of familiarity is also parallel with what Freud defined: “We must also include in the category of the miraculous and the ‘uncanny’ the peculiar feeling we have, in certain moments and situations, of having had exactly the same experience once before or of having once before been in the same place, though our efforts never succeed in clearly remembering the previous occasion that announces itself in this way” (Freud, 1901: 1335). Whether Eddie and May had encountered before is not explicitly given

in the play; therefore, this familiarity becomes strange. They fall in love at the first sight as if they had already experienced that attraction in their lives before. This unexpected feeling of sudden familiarity creates an uncanny atmosphere.

Regarding the definition of uncanny “return of the repressed”, The Old Man’s reappearance in May and Eddie’s lives is also uncanny. He symbolizes the return of the repressed as he discloses May and Eddie’s repressed traumas. Due to their repression, they lost their familiarity with each other. Behaving according to the ‘pleasure principle’, May and Eddie have lost their association with their childhood memories. Therefore, when they recall a memory, it evokes uncanniness because of its unfamiliarity. Like it is in **Buried Child**, May and Eddie endeavor to repress their traumatic memories, so they experience failure to remember while talking about the past in **Fool for Love**. The Old Man also expresses his misrecognition and unfamiliarity in these words: “Amazing thing is, neither one a' you look a bit familiar to me. Can't figure that one out. I don't recognize myself in either one a' you. Never did” (1.24). His statement is a reminder of Dodge’s difficulty in recognizing Vince.

The issue of *doppelgänger* emerges thanks to the repetitive cycle in which May and Eddie not only repeat themselves but also each other’s actions. Having opposite feelings causes role reversal between them. The moment May falls in love with Eddie, he wants to leave; and the moment Eddie wants to be reconciled with May, she refuses. They resemble Austin and Lee who constantly switch emotion and behavior. This repetitiveness and uncanniness are related to each other as Bektaş remarks: “Freud relates [...] uncanny experience with the infantile psychology and “compulsion to repeat,” which is directly connected with the unconscious and childhood traumas. The thing that is repeated is considered to be the result of the process of repression” (1.14). As both Eddie and May were compelled to subdue their feelings such as anger against their father and love for each other, they involuntarily repeat reflecting these feelings consecutively.

CONCLUSION

Sam Shepard's family plays are substantial samples of how the father and son relationship may result in irrevocable traumas in families. According to Sigmund Freud, neurosis and hysteria stem from the childhood traumas which were repressed, and the child's relationship with his parents is highly influential during his childhood period while he is completing his developmental stages. Besides being exposed to traumas by being born into dysfunctional families, children also inherit their ancestor's traumas. Therefore, traumas are intergenerational which affects not only individuals but also their families. In Sam Shepard's family plays, it is seen that the children are entrapped in their dysfunctional families and fallen fathers' fate. Freud's psychoanalysis theory is applicable to analyse Sam Shepard's plays because the main conflict in the plays comes from the repressed traumas, and all characters' relationship with each other is the reflection of those traumas.

In all the plays which were analyzed in the previous chapters, the impact of incompetent fathers on their sons is observed. The father's ambiguous role as a patriarch weakens his authority, and it brings rivalry with his sons. This gap of authority leads to Oedipus Complex in **Buried Child**, a conflict between brothers in **True West**, isolation for Wesley in **Curse of the Starving Class**, and apathy in **Fool for Love**. All of them are in the quest of identity and finding a way out of their predestined curse, yet the reminders of their past haunt them throughout their lives. The sons grow up with violent and rude fathers whom they take as role models. As a result, violence is externalized in the sons' behaviors against the weaker ones such as their sisters, girlfriends, or mothers. The violence that is frequently displayed on the stage in all the plays is the representation of Sam Shepard's own childhood traumas.

the patterns of masculinity for Shepard—and for his characters—are intricately linked with a violence perceived to stem from a need to prove one's self a man—to "act out some idea of manhood" instilled in sons by their

fathers. Shepard himself recalls how his own father projected upon him a "macho image" of masculinity: "I know what this thing is about because I was a victim of it; it was part of my life, my old man tried to force on me a notion of what it was to be a 'man.'" (McDonough, 1995: 65,66)

Similar to Sam Shepard's father, ancestors in the plays transmit their characteristics and traumas to their descendants. Like it is the case in the fathers, the sons' tendency towards violence in the analyzed plays demonstrates that they cannot maintain their power otherwise.

In Sam Shepard's family quartet, the fathers are irresponsible and idle figures who are alcoholic, violent, and insensible. Therefore, their sons live under the shadow of these characteristics and are affected by them. It is not possible to see a quintessential father figure in any of the aforementioned four plays. "The corruption of the father's law is apparent in the majority of Shepard's works of his maturity, where the father is usually a drunken, self-centered, worthless, violent, abusive lout ([...]). The son's conflict with this father's legacy reflects his struggle, often an ineffective struggle, to escape that legacy" (McDonough, 2002: 163). In **Curse of the Starving Class**, Wesley's fate is sealed by his alcoholic father. Due to the absence of a powerful father figure, Wesley must carry the burden of taking care of his mother and sister. Likewise, in **True West**, the alcoholic father is absent both on the stage and in the lives of the Austin and Lee brothers. The father's absence creates the space of authority causing the rivalry between the brothers. That the father is never seen throughout the play induces the sons, Austin and Lee, to endeavor to form their own personalities although they cannot get rid of their father's shadow. In addition to these father figures, there is another impotent father in **Buried Child**, who has witnessed an incestuous relationship between his wife and son which indicates that he does not have enough power to maintain his father's position in the family. "Freud hypothesized that boys experienced the father as a competitor and prohibitor of incestuous sexual impulses, an object of envy and hate, and someone who provokes guilt and fear" (qtd. in Jones 45), so when the father is passive and not

competitive, he cannot prevent incest because he is too weak to punish. In **Buried Child**, there is a kind of father who cannot prohibit incest in the family as he cannot provoke any fear due to his quiescent position in the family. Another incestuous relationship which is between siblings is observed in **Fool for Love**. The curse on May and Eddie's relationship has been transmitted through generations as Eddie duplicates his father's crooked relationship. "Shepard's primary focus throughout his work is on questions of male identity. His male protagonists struggle to prove themselves to be men, but are limited, even entrapped, by the images of masculine identity passed on to them by their actual or cultural fathers" (McDonough, 1995: 65). Eddie's proneness to violence is his means of proving masculinity which was taught by his father.

In conclusion, the father and son relationship is worth to analyze because of its tremendous effect on literature. Many quintessential writers' relationship with their fathers such as Tennessee Williams, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevski in addition to Sam Shepard influenced their works. These writers' unsuccessful male bonding with their fathers compelled them to reflect their traumas in their literary works through the characters who are outcasts struggling with problems. It can be inferred that the sons inherit their fathers' traits, and they bequeath those intergenerational traits and traumas to the characters they created - like father, like son.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbot Michael: “The Curse of the Misbegotten: The Wanton Son in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill and Sam Shepard”, **The Eugene O'Neill Review**, vol. 18, no. 1/2, 1994, pp. 193–198. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29784538. Accessed 3 Dec. 2020.
- Adler, P. Thomas: “Repetition and Regression in **Curse of the Starving Class** and **Buried Child**”, **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 111-122
- Akillı.S.: “The Destruction of the American Dream in Sam Shepard’s **Curse of the Starving Class**”, **Journal of American Studies of Turkey** (2004): 47-57
<<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/jast/issue/52930/699915>>
- Aristotle: **Poetics**, Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2008.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1974/1974-h/1974-h.htm>
- Bottoms, Stephen James: **The Theatre of Sam Shepard: States of Crisis**, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Bektaş, Zehra **Freudian Uncanny and the Double in the Picture of Dorian**

- Şahin: **Gray**, 2019, Çankaya University, M.A. Dissertation
<http://earsiv.cankaya.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/20.500.12416/4031>
- Burk, Robert
Eugene: **Reading Shepard and Lacan: A Dramaturgy of the Subject**, 1986, University of Washington, Ph.D. Dissertation
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/1d6767025898e6ec34a5ddac1d0cf257/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Clum, John M.: “The Classic Western and Sam Shepard’s Family Sagas”, **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 171-188.
- Debusscher,
Gilbert: **New Essays on American Drama**, Rodopi, 1989
- DeLuzio, Crista: “The Personal and Political Postwar American Family”, **American Studies**, vol. 54, no. 4, 2016, pp. 119–132. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/44982357. Accessed 24 Mar. 2021.
- Demastes, William
W.: "Understanding Sam Shepard's Realism", **Comparative Drama**, vol. 21 no. 3, 1987, p. 229-248. *Project MUSE*, [doi:10.1353/cdr.1987.0000](https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1987.0000).
- Diamond,
Michael J.: “Fathers with sons: Psychoanalytic perspectives on 'good enough' fathering throughout the life cycle”, **Gender and Psychoanalysis**, 3 (1998): 243-99.

Murphy, Brenda.: “Shepard Writes about Writing”, **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 123-138.

Tabitha Freeman: “Psychoanalytic Concepts of Fatherhood Patriarchal Paradoxes and the Presence of an Absent Authority”, **Studies in Gender and Sexuality**, vol. 9, no. 2, April 2008, pp. 113-139.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15240650801935156?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

Freud, Sigmund: “Abstracts of The Scientific Writings of Dr. Sigm. Freud”, 1877-1897, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**. Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 436-25.

Freud, Sigmund: “Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis”, 1910, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 2195-2239.

Freud, Sigmund: “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning”, 1911, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 2550-2557.

- Freud, Sigmund: **General Psychology Theory: Papers on Metapsychology**, A Touchstone Book, 2008.
- Freud, Sigmund: “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego”, 1921, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 3763-3834.
- Freud, Sigmund: “Moses, His People and Monotheist Religion”, 1938, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 4882-4953.
- Freud, Sigmund: “Mourning and Melancholia”, 1917 [1915], **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 3039-3053.
- Freud, Sigmund: “Remembering Repeating and Working-Through”, 1914, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 2497-506.
- Freud, Sigmund: “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex”, 1924, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 4083-4091.
- Freud, Sigmund: **The Ego and the Id**, Dover Publications Inc., 2018.
- Freud, Sigmund: “The Psychical Mechanism of Forgetfulness”, 1898, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of**

- Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 476-484.
- Freud, Sigmund: “The Psychopathology of Everyday Life”, 1901, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 1099-1347.
- Freud, Sigmund: “The ‘Uncanny’”, 1919, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 3675-700.
- Freud, Sigmund: “Totem and Taboo”, 1913, **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 1-24, W.W. Norton, 1976, pp. 2650-799.
- Gunning, Tom: “The Uncanny Reflections, Modern Illusions: Sighting the Modern Optical The uncanny”, **The uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties**. 2008, pp. 68-90.
- Güzel, Nisa
Harika: **Staging Loss: Melancholia and Working-Through in Three Plays by Sam Shepard**, 2008, Ankara University.
- Goldbach, Joel,
and James A.
Godley: **Inheritance in Psychoanalysis**, State University of New York Press, 2018.
- Favorini, A.: **Memory in play: From aeschylus to Sam Shepard**, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

- Heilman, Robert B. "Shepard's Plays: Stylistic and Thematic Ties", **The Sewanee Review**, vol. 100, no. 4, 1992, pp. 630–644. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27546616. Accessed 28 Mar. 2021.
- Kadhem, Nibras Jawad: "Fathers and Sons: Family Relationships in Sam Shepard's **Buried Child** and **True West**", **Journal of College of Education for Women**, Vol.19, No.1, May 2008, pp. 185-201.
- Kim A. Jones: PhD, LCSW (2007) "Assessing the Impact of Father-Absence from a Psychoanalytic Perspective", **Psychoanalytic Social Work**, 14:1, 43-58, DOI: [10.1300/J032v14n01_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J032v14n01_03)
- King, Kimball: "Sam Shepard and the cinema", **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 210-226
- Lee, Eric Andrew: **The Other Side of Love: Sam Shepard's Gothic Family Plays**, PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2003.
- Lyons, Charles R.: "Shepard's Family Trilogy and the Conventions of Modern Realism", **Rereading Shepard: Contemporary Critical Essays on the Plays of Sam Shepard**, edited by Leonard Wilcox, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 115-129.
- Lyons, Charles R.: "Text as Agent in Sam Shepard's '**Curse of the Starving Class**'", **Comparative Drama**, vol. 24, no. 1, 1990, pp. 24–33. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41153439. Accessed 11 Jan. 2021.

- McDonough, Carla J.: "Patriarchal Pathology from The Holy Ghostly to Silent Tongue", **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 154-171
- McDonough, Carla J.: "The Politics of Stage Space: Women and Male Identity in Sam Shepard's Family Plays", **Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism**, vol. 9, no. 2, March 1995, pp. 65-84.
- Michitaka, Morimoti: "Male Conflicts in Sam Shepard's Family Trilogy", **Osaka Literary Review**, vol. 42, 2003, pp.121-138.
- Opipari, Benjamin.: "Shhhhhhhame: Silencing the Family Secret in Sam Shepard's **Buried Child**", **Style**, vol. 44, no. 1-2, 2010, pp. 123–138. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.44.1-2.123. Accessed 13 Mar. 2021.
- Prescott, Cynthia Culver: "Representing the Ideal American Family: Avarad Fairbanks and the Transformation of the Western Pioneer Monument", **Pacific Historical Review**, vol. 85, no. 1, 2016, pp. 110–142. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26419587. Accessed 23 Mar. 2021.
- Roudané, Matthew: "Plays and Playwrights Since 1970", **The Cambridge History of American Theatre Vol.3**, edited by Don B. Wilmeth,

Christopher Bigsby, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 331-419.

Roudané,
Matthew: “Sam Shepard’s The Late Henry Moss”, **The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard**, edited by Matthew Roudané, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 279-291

Prohászka Rád,
Boróka: **Dramatic Representation of a Culture of Violence in Sam Shepard’s The Late Henry Moss**, Sapientia University, 2010

Shepard, Sam: **Sam Shepard: Seven Plays**, Bantam Books, 1981.

Shepard, Sam: **Fool for Love**, Dramatists Play Service Incorporation. 1983

Watt, Diane
Lilian: **The Disintegration of a Dream: A Study of Sam Shepard’s Family Trilogy, Curse of the Starving Class, Buried Child and True West**, University of South Africa, 1995.
http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/17851/dissertation_watt_dl.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Shulman,
Shmuel, and Inge **Fathers and Adolescents: Developmental and Clinical Perspectives**, Routledge, 1997.

Seiffge-Krenke:

Taav, Michael: **A Body across the Map: The Father Son Plays of Sam Shepard**, UMI, 1997.

