

Topophilia and Spatial Anxiety: A Geocritical Reading of Sam Shepard's Buried Child

Ahmed Hatim Abadi

Dept. Of English, College of Arts, University of Basrah

Prof. Alaa Abdul Hussain Hashim

Dept. Of English, College of Arts, Al-Maaqal University

ahatm379@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper highlights the physical setting in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* according to the theoretical framework of Geocriticism. It examines its fictional and real spaces and the relationship between the physical space that exists in nature and the mental space in the minds of the characters. This study argues that the spatial perspective is so dominant in the postmodern society where Individuals suffer from loneliness, anxiety, fragmentation, detachment, and displacement. This Postmodern geocritical method of analysis is applied to Shepard's *Buried Child* as a play that discusses many elements that are relevant to the main precepts of geocriticism like transgression, place, Space, social boundaries, movement, and settlement. These elements show how characters are moving throughout the play and how Shepard uses them to structure his play. This study argues that the role of place in the analysis of literary texts is important like other critical categories Such as gender, sex, and psychoanalysis. It shows how the critical studies ignore the place and its role as part of the setting in general and as important element in the development of actions throughout the literary texts.

Introduction: Geocriticism

Historically, geocriticism is an analytical tool that could be traced back to the time of Aristotle because it covers one of the most important questions in literary theory which is: Where the literary text takes place? Over the years, this question ties the actions that

happen in literary texts with the place and space in which they occur. Besides, place and space are considered main concepts that shape any literary text. Place and space help to establish the general meaning to a literary text especially in the postmodern era where the place and space reflect what is going on in society and how individuals suffer from fragmentation and displacement (Michael J, 34).

In geocriticism, place and space have an important role and can be regarded as a critical category as gender, class, and race. As a literary theoretical apparatus, geocriticism provides a new way of analysing, reading, critiquing literary texts. It raises one of the main questions in the geocritical studies which is: what does geography add to the literary theory? This question addresses the concept of place inside the text. According to geocritics like Robert Tally and Bertrand Westphal, the main aim of geocriticism, which has been an important tool in critical investigation from the mid of nineties, is to distinguish between real and fictional spaces in literary texts. Edward Soja, a geographical and urban theorist introduced the concept of the “spatial turn” for the first time in 1989 and from that time on, many studies have started to give significance to the place in the literary theory (Hones, 147).

According to geocriticism, the critic or the reader should examine the situation in which the geographical landscape and incidents are portrayed and how the characters and the authors explore the fictional space inside the text. In other words, geocriticism focuses on how the author explores the fictional space in the text and to what extent the text reflects the real spaces and how characters interact with this reflection. Geocriticism studies the representation of place in the texts and differentiates between place and space as two important concepts. One of the founders of geocriticism is Bertrand Westphal, a French scholar whose book on geocriticism was translated to English under the title *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional spaces*. This book is a manifesto of geocriticism as a theory in which Westphal gives two definitions of place and space. He writes that space is a term that

covers the universe and it is “oriented toward the infinitely large or reduced to the infinitely small, which is itself infinitely and infinitesimally vast” (Westphal 4). Space is an area that highlights actions and physical movement and is considered the physical area in which a story happens (Abdullah, 2). On the other hand, place is the area where the eye of the observer stops when it sees a general scene, therefore, it is ‘a point of rest’ (4). In other words, it is where the observer pauses, stops, and rests so that the person “becomes familiar with a space, it becomes a place” (Abdullah 2).

According to geography, concepts of space and place differ from each other. Space is a concept that refers to the abstract, and to the thing without its physical existence while place refers to the ways that people or individuals occupy this space For a particular purpose which could be a psychological purpose (Agnew, 4). In literary theory, there are differences between these two concepts as well (Hones, 149). According to poststructuralism, theorists like Foucault, Lefebvre and Soja Use the concept of space in their analysis rather than the concept of place. In his Theory of “heterotopia”, Foucault focuses on the three concepts of “textual, fictional, and imaginary” spaces. He uses these three concepts to give a geocritical reading of texts that depend on space. “Heterotopia” according to Foucault is a type of space that has many sub-types which might be real or fictional (cited in Gaston, 20).

Literary theorists have started to pay attention to space since the 1980s, and has become one of the important factors in literary theory (Michael Flusty, 40). In his book *Spatiality*, Robert Tally indicates that this “spatial interest ” paved the way later to geocriticism to appear as a literary theory (Tally,20). The writings of Michael Foucault, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Soja reinforced geocriticism because they deal with the concepts of rootlessness, fragmentation, borders, and alienation in their Writings. Geocriticism emphasizes the study of “territoriality” which focuses on the spaces and places in the text with a special interest in how the writer presents the relationship between

these places and the characters. In consequence, Geocriticism highlights the relationship between the place and the events happening in this place. Geocriticism does not highlight the place in the abstract but rather it investigates The representation of that place in the text (Julian, 20). Literature provides us with The “possible worlds” that connect the real world with the literary text and define the Link between the referent and its representation as Robert Westphal writes:

The first premise of geocritical theory states that time and space share a common Plan, subject to an entirely oscillatory logic whereby the fragmentary ceases to be Oriented to a coherent whole. Postmodern Temporality is characterized by Isotropy, which is the scientific name of this Systemic indeterminacy, and this Isotropy is then extended to the spatial Representation. The second premise of geocriticism is that the relationship between the representation of space and real Space is Indeterminate . Rather than considering a spatial or Spatiotemporally Representation as not “real, “we view every representation (whether literary, iconographic, etc.) as referring to a broadly imagined reality That, in and through its extreme extension, is subject to a weak ontology. From These Two premises, we understand that space cannot be understood except in its Heterogeneity (Westphal, 37) .

According to Westphal, geocriticism is founded on three basic theoretical notions Which are: spatio temporality, transgressivity, and referentiality. These notions summarize Westphal’s interest in the literary representation of place and space. Westphal demonstrates that spatio temporality comes from modern physics in which space and time represent a continuum. But in literary theory, the analysis of geocriticism focuses on spatial data and therefore, geocriticism has a connection with architecture and urban studies. Also, the relationship between geography and literature is transgressive, which means that geocriticism as a theory goes beyond place in its literal meaning. Westphal argues that all

places are known especially in postmodern era but we should look beyond these spaces and places to discover their dimensions. He states that the main aim of geocriticism is not the place itself, but rather the representation of that place. He highlights the referential relationship between the world and the text as one of the most important theoretical notions of geocriticism. He argues that there is a referentiality between the world and the text or between the referent and its representation. Westphal explains this notion in that as we understand the fictional or imaginary places by absorbing the levels of these Places, they become a member of our real world as we realize it.

The geocritic, according to Westphal, is the one who understands this relationship between these two worlds and is fully aware that this referentiality is continuous and It is what makes geocriticism a field worth studying. Westphal opines that in regard To imaginary texts, there should be real places that these texts point to. He states “the referentiality of fiction allows it to point to a recognizable place, real or imaginary or A bit of both at once, while also transforming that place, making it part of a fictional World” (Westphal, 83).

Robert Tally develops the role of spatiality in the study of literature. In his book *Spatiality*(2013), Tally argues that the relationship between geography and cartography starts from the links between space in literary texts and the spatial mapping. He thinks that there should be a shift in cultural and social studies and in the representation of space inside these texts. According to Tally, the cartography of space mapping should be involved in the study of these texts to “undermine the dominance of the temporal paradigm in social and philosophical theories” (Tally,3). Tally thinks that “we might add the reader’s literary geography. The critical reader becomes a kind of geographer who actively interprets the literary map in such a way as to present new, sometimes hitherto unforeseen mappings” (Tally,79). Later, In his book *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative* (2014), Tally succeeded in applying his theory of

cartography by combining narrative and the mapping. He writes that this combination “surveys a broad expanse of literary historical territories, including romance and realism, modernism and imperialism, and the postmodern play of spaces in the era of globalization” (33).

Furthermore, Tally refers to the role of the author in shaping these mapping, and Writes “spatiality explores the ways authors use both strictly mimetic and more Fantastic means to figure forth what Edward Soja called the ‘real-and-imagined’ spaces of their respective Worlds”(4). So, geocriticism according to Tally is an interpretive tool that reflects the social and cultural aspects of place in literary contexts. In his book *Topophilia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination*, Which is a collection of essays that explore the connection between space, place, literary texts, and mapping, Tally states that the era that we live in is “an age of enhanced spatiality ” in which “we are always mapping, whether we are aware of it or not” (3). Tally differentiates between three categories: which are spatial cartography, geocriticism, and literary cartography as a mediator between the place and its representation in the text (38).

In his essays, Tally focuses on the framework of spatial theory and develops the theoretical aspects of geocriticism. The title of the first chapter of the book is “Topophilia”, which is a concept that Tally explains from where he borrowed and Why he uses it here. Topophilia is a term based on topophilia which is used by the Chinese American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. Unlike Yi-Fu Tuan who defines Topophilia as “joyous” (Tally,20), Tally defines it as “a certain identifiable Place-mindedness that informs our activities and thinking” (23). Tally is known for his development of the terms and according to him topophilia should resonate with topophobia. He highlights the “spatial anxiety ” as a part of human experience, saying that “the pervasive place-mindedness infusing our subjective experience in and apprehension of the world is characterized by a profound sense of unease, anxiety or discontent” and “even when we are

‘at home’, we maintain our awareness of the Unfamiliar, the unheimlich, and a subtle, yet visceral feeling of a spatial anxiety Subtends our thought and action.” (23).

In his essay “Geocriticism and classic American Literature”, Tally indicates That the narrative maps of American writing “make sense and give form to the world In a recognizable way ” and the function of the critic is to “make sense of the ways We make sense of the world ”(3). Through the notion of “spatial anxiety”, Tally refers to how people feel when they read the literature of the postmodern era. He Indicates that the author conveys his feeling of the unstable social and economic status of that era to his readers.

In his book *Spatiality* (2013) Tally highlights the changes in social and economic conditions in postmodern era and how they affect and deconstruct one’s conventions. One reason is “man’s lack of sociological imagination That allows him to understand his own experience” (8). Man cannot realize his chances in life unless he visualizes himself in other’s lives or as Wright Mills states Unless he calculates “his own fate by situating himself within his period”. For Example, when the protagonist in a text embarks on a journey into Canada or Alaska, The author presents him as the one who can deal with the harsh climate of these Places. Tally concludes his essay about “spatial anxiety” and “cartography” by highlighting the importance of the connection or the relationship between history, geography and their connection with society. In order to make these three fields Complete, Tally views geography as a factor that connects between history and society.

Spatial Anxiety in *Buried Child*

Buried Child is written and presented for the first time in 1978. In 1979, it won Pulitzer prize for drama and launched Sam Shepard to be one of the important Playwrights in the United States at that time. The play highlights the Fragmentation of the American society,

family, and social relations in a context That is repetitive in most of Shepard's plays where he focuses on disappointment And disillusionment that American society in general and family in particular Feel after the rural economic slowdown in 1970s.

In the play, Shepard presents his darker version of the American family in The post-modern society. He shapes the play with family secrets that move from One generation to another. The circle of secrets starts from Dodge, who spends All the play wrapped in an old blanket on the sofa, to his wife Halie, who speaks To him from the upstairs and decides to meet the clergyman. On the other hand, Tilden, their eldest son, has no goal in his life and loses his sense of the present Life and who has an old incest with his mother. Bradley, has one leg and spends All the play with his father Dodge. Vince, Tilden's son is the character who seeks To re-establish the values of the family and Shelly, his girlfriend. Tilden rejects Vince as his son so he rejects the relationship between Vince and Shelly and Insists that he had a child once and now he is dead and buried.

Characters spend all the play in their house where they deny to accept their family connections by referring to the grave of the buried child in the backyard of the house which refers to the incest between Tilden and his mother and how Dodge kills the buried child and lives all these years with this secret. Physically, the buried child refers to Halie and Tilden's incest and the child who was killed by Dodge and buried in the backyard behind the house. Metaphorically, the dead Child reflects all the children in the family, all of them are dead to their father And mother and to one another and unable to get the recognition from any of Their relations, Vince leaves the house one night and goes on an alcoholic party, Leaving Shelly alone with Bradley who attacks her sexually. When Vince returns The next morning, totally drunk, his open violence provides Halie and Dodge With a clue to Vince's identity, once again suggesting that behavior mechanically Passes from generation to generation. When Dodge dies, Vince declares himself As the family's new patriarch just as Tilden enters holding the corpse of the Buried child. The play's highly

ambiguous ending reflects the hope as a new Generation is born against despairing images of denial, disease, and death.

In *Buried Child*, Shepard recreates a multi-dimensional space (Zhang 4) Which means that time and characters' experiences move in different forms and Create a sense of chaos in the play. In this play, there are two spaces which are Represented in the places that characters live in. First is the living room which is In the opening scene of the play. Second is the backyard where the child is Buried. In the first place, the father Dodge is lying in the living room in a scene That resonates with the lying child in the backyard. Moreover, a prominent style in most of Shepard's plays is the use of non-Linear plot which is replaced with a circular plot indicating that every action in The play is a story by its own, and the secret of the child becomes the story of Every character. By doing so, Shepard shows how the faults of the family Members influence generation after another. The use of the buried child image is "more as a means of intensifying a highly symbolic moment than evoking a Schizophrenic reality" (Derose 143). The action of the play occurs in multi-dimensional spaces and places.

Shepard refers to the connection between Dodge, who is living in one single Place throughout the play which is his coach and the child in the backyard of the House. Throughout this connection, Shepard portrays Dodge as a "dying character" (Zhang6) because he appears lying on his coach and uses the blanket To hide his body when he tries to drink Alcohol which he hides under his bed.

On the other hand, the buried child forms a resemblance to Dodge's status, both Of them are dying, lying, and hidden. Moreover, Shepard portrays Dodge as Weak, old, sick and who can not take care of himself. When Bradley arrives to Cut his hair, he refers to himself as "an invisible man"(18):

DODGE: (After pause.) There's no reason for him to even come over here.

HALIE'S VOICE: He feels responsible.

DODGE: For my hair?

HALIE'S VOICE: For your appearance.

DODGE: My appearance is out of his domain! It's even out of mine! In fact, it's Disappeared! I'm an invisible man!(18).

Shepard describes the space and place in a very unique way. All the play Happens in Dodge's house but characters seem to lose their sense of time that Moves around them. With his conversation with Halie about their memories of Horse riding, Dodge argues that "the world doesn't stop just because you're Upstairs"(29). On the other hand, Halie indicates that Ansel "played basketball Better than anyone", but Bradley later states that "Ansel never played Basketball"

HALIE: They almost cover the stench of sin in this house. Hanky-panky. Just Magnificent! The smell. We'll have to put some at the foot of Ansel's statue. On The day of the Unveiling, (HALIE finds a silver flask of whiskey in DEWIS_s Vest pocket. She pulls it out. DODGE Looks on eagerly, HALIE crosses to DODGE, opens the flask, and takes a sip. To DODGE.) Ansel's Getting a statue, Dodge. Did you know that? Not a plaque but a real live statue. A full Bronze. Tip to toe. A basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other. BRADLEY: (His back to HALIE.) He never played basketball! (33).

The chronological time of the play is difficult to follow because it is revealed Through characters' memories and perspectives which reflect their confused identities. Furthermore, in the context of spatiality, Shepard divides into entities

The only place in the play which is the house. It becomes more than one "isolated" house that every character lives in according to their perspective:

HALIE: (Moving centre.) We haven't had corn here for over thirty years.

TILDEN: The whole back lot's full of corn. Far as the eye can see. Like an Ocean.

DODGE: (To HALIE.) Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't Stop just because you're upstairs. Corn keeps growing. Rain Keeps raining.

HALIE: I'm not unaware of the world around me! Thank you very much. It so Happens that I have an overall view from the upstairs. A panorama. The Backyard's in plain view of My window. And there's no corn to speak of. Absolutely none! (29).

Dodge is in the living room. Halie is upstairs and moves between it and the stairs without reaching the living room. The buried child is in the backyard under the ground. These differences in their spaces support the main themes of the play and the ideas that Shepard wants to highlight. For example, Halie always has a conversation with Dodge from the upstairs without seeing each other, She wears a black dress and later she replaces it with yellow without any notice from Dodge who seems not to notice anything. On the other hand, Dodge prevents her from leaving the upstairs and coming to him. He encourages her to stay where she is which gives a sense that every character in the play has their own private place and through it they have their own secrets and mysteries. At the end of the play, Vince, son of Tilden, becomes one of the family members and they start to treat him as one of them.

At this point, other characters start to change their "isolated dimensions of place". Tilden moves to the upstairs with the corpse of the child while Halie for the first time in the play goes down to the backyard. She has spent a long time upstairs far from the buried child in an attempt to remove her sense of guilt. In many of his plays, Shepard makes his characters face their memories and problems directly as part of his "narrative fragmentation " in which he connects every perspective of characters with the situation they face. Marilgn E. Hechler (1989) states that Shepard uses this style of writing and sets to "reinscribe the central actions of an ancient fertility" (118). She discusses at length Shepard's use of myths and allusions as a technique to connect the past with the present

and to free the characters from the faults of the past (Hechler 33). At the end of Act One, Tilden “stands holding the husks over Dodge and looking down at him and gently spread the corn husks over the whole length of Dodge’s body and gathers more husk and repeats the procedure until the floor is clean of corn husks and Dodge is completely covered in them, except his head” (38).

This process of covering indicates that Tilden wants to free his father from his faults and sins and repeats the process at the end of the play where Vince puts the blanket over Dodge’s face and the roses over his chest after his death. Dodge is dead and Tilden too and the play ends where it started by achieving the circular movement of the plot. Shepard highlights this circular movement of the plot rather than the linear one to reflect each character perspective and position which are based on their places and spaces. In this circular plot, the buried child is the active or the prominent place that the whole play is about, Laurin R. Porter (2015) discusses at length the end of the play and states that “Buried child’s closing scene is patterned after its opening, with clearly defined parallels in dialogue, imagery and staging” (108).

She emphasizes the role of the settings in general which gives a sense of a separated middle class family that is stuck between its past and present and every character in this family struggles to find himself again. For example, Tilden is stuck between his past in New Mexico where he did his crimes and started to find his stable life and bury the ominous past, he says “ That’s what I know. I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but I just lost my voice” (33). But, he finds himself drowning and New Mexico still affects his identity and life. His new character is shown as rootless, separate, and not stable. Halie thinks that his return would enhance the family and he will take his responsibilities. But, later she describes his return as “so much trouble” (34).

Shepard highlights the physical space and place in this play to emphasize the relationship between fictional and real places of the characters. In most of his plays and

especially in *Buried Child*, Shepard shows the importance of space and place over time which is a logical way to highlight the spatial explanation of the text. This spatial explanation enables the critics as Westphal states to feel “free to employ a methodology that allows the space to be seen from new angle, an angle that resituates the entire field ” (113). Shepard’s *Buried Child* tells a lot about the house of the family which evokes and dominates the whole story.

Shepard emphasizes his postmodern background which has a great influence on society in general and on his plays in particular. He presents the space before time to emphasize the idea that his characters live a special relationship with their places and that’s prompt some critics to refer to Shepard’s characters as “repetitive” in most of his plays. Tilden, for example, suffers from his past and always finds what makes him remember his old days. He thinks that his past stays in New Mexico and his present life would be better. But, unlike what he thinks, his past lives with him even after his return to his father’s house. To highlight this notion, Shepard depends on description in this play to set places with characters’ situations. From the opening scene, one notices that Shepard separates between Dodge and Halie to give a space to the description of the places. Dodge speaks with Halie with a distance that separates them which is the stairs. He never goes upstairs and never goes down to speak with her even when she goes down. She never speaks with him directly. This separation gives a sense of their loneliness, fragmentation, and alienation.

Moreover, Shepard depicts a detailed description of the physical features of the place and surrounding. The settings of this play is idyllic. Shepard writes in the stage direction of the play:

“Old wooden staircase down left with pale, frayed carpet laid down on the steps. The stairs lead offstage left up into the wings with no landing. Up right is an old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots. Stage right of the sofa is an upright lamp with a faded yellow shade and a small night table with several small bottles of pills on it. Down

right of the sofa, with the screen facing the sofa, is a large, old-fashioned brown TV. A flickering blue light comes from the screen, but no image, no sound. In the dark, the light of the lamp and the TV slowly brighten in the black space. The space behind the sofa, upstage, is a large screened-in porch with a board floor. A solid interior door to stage right of the sofa leads from the porch to the outside. Beyond that are the shapes of dark elm trees (3).

It gives a sense of the rural life of the American society and family and shows how the family belongs to its American origins. In Act Two, Shelly is waiting to meet the family and expresses that she would see a normal family like “Norman Rockwell cover or something ”(39) and Vince answers her that this family is “American”. In Geocriticism, space and place are more important than any other element in the story and this priority gives a sense that characters always find themselves between their current motion and their backward movement like Halie who stands with her memories which appear as a group of places that make her feel sad. According to Westphal, the place reveals the relationship between our extrinsic world and our intrinsic which is our experiences.

Since *Buried Child* is set in one particular place, which is the house of the family, Shepard seeks to reveal the distance between fiction and reality in the minds of his characters throughout the geographical indicators in the play. He refers to the significance of the place by highlighting a story and characters in his writing. He focuses on the complexity of the place by insisting on the idea that the spaces in the play are in imaginative form. He gives a specific description of the place to emphasize the relationship between characters who are determined by their belonging to the place. Shepherd mixes between imaginative and physical places to draw the mental map of the characters.

Throughout the play, characters always find themselves in a process of discovering the self, society, and their existence. Tilden, who is a newcomer to the house of the family undergoes a transgression, which is according to Westphal “a process accompanying

movement and motive”(45). He transgresses the boundaries from Neo Mexico to his father’s house to start a new life. He ignores his past where he did his crimes to find the peace in his new life. Moreover, he always remembers when he loses his position as a footballer star in the high school which makes him escape and leaves his family to the west where he commits his crimes and then returns to his family.

According to Geocriticism, Tilden loses his “sense of imagination” although he always tries to return and find the suitable environment to live in peace and leave the past behind him. But, as much as he tries, he loses his “sociological imagination” which is his mental ability to find himself in a place again, and his character will be distracted between the places that he lives in. This mental ability as Wright Mills believes is the “quality of mind that will help the individual to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening with themselves” (5).

So, Tilden cannot realizes his own experience and tries to achieve what he fails in throughout his life. Shepard describes him as “burned out” and “profoundly displaced”. He portrays him as a person suffering from his past that leads him to his end which is the scandal of the child. The physical space of the house turns to be dangerous. Tilden faces the dangers of the child as much as the dangers of his crimes in the past in New Mexico. He feels anxious, alienated and separated in his place which always reminds him of his previous places. Robert Tally (2011) highlights this problem by referring to it as “cartographic anxiety or special perplexity” (1). Tilden is no more able to understand his own experience because he loses his “sociological imagination ” or as Wright Mills (1959) states that he is unable to “calculate his own fate by situating himself within his period” (5). In Act Three, Tilden enters from the backyard, “ his arms loaded with fresh ears of corn”

DODGE: Where’d you pick it from?

TILDEN: Right out back.

DODGE: Out back where?!

TILDEN: Right out in back.

DODGE: There's nothing out there—in back.

TILDEN: There's corn.

DODGE: There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! (69-70)

That is to say that individuals like Tilden cannot recognize their experiences, opportunities anymore unless they are being in the society or by “becoming aware of all individuals in his circumstances”(5). Tilden is aware that the backyard is empty of any plants. But, Shepard refers to the corn as a symbol to the buried child, who is lying in the yard. Tilden gives himself a self-image that allows him to hold the corn inside the house whether his parents would believe him or not.

Tilden's journey from his father's house to his dream to become a famous player, and to New Mexico and then his return to his father's house occurs in space, time, and obvious social hierarchy. These three concepts are the textual representations of the journey from reality (Abdullah 7). In other words, Tilden's journey is a metaphor of postmodern American society and his journey is a representation of the fragmentation, loneliness, and losing of independence of individuals at that time. Tilden's journey and his chances to find his peaceful life and environment represent the estrangement of man from nature. His journey is a symbol of the changes in one's life throughout one's culture, and the culture of Neo Mexico where he has left his past which leads to his estrangement. In the dictionary of literary terms and motifs, the journey is defined as “an estrangement from the protective environment of the familiar in order to discover the newness of oneself and of things, its psycho-literary space lies in what Gabrielle Rey has called an “endless tugging between

homeness and the infinite, in a ceaseless quest for an elsewhere. [...] It is the element of seeking that transforms the banal act of traversing space into an authentic act of travelling [...]. So fundamental is the experience of the journey that the passage from life to death or the progression of the spirit through the various stages of virtue and knowledge are expressed in travel metaphors” (Seigneurit 1293).

Tilden has left his world to discover the hidden or the unknown world which lately leads him to a separation from his society to become self alienated which is one of the main characteristics of post modern man who passes through his safety world to the mysterious world. In act two, Tilden loses this inner struggle to find himself again after his first journey and his return to the house of the family which make him lose his identity.

VINCE: (Reentering, to TILDEN.) YOU want anything, Dad?

TILDEN: (Looks up at VINCE.) Me?

VINCE: yeah , you , Dad . That's you ! (58)

On the other hand, Shepard gives his readers the geography of the place which is the house of the family. From the beginning of the play, he divided the place into two spaces one is the living room and the other is the backyard. Throughout this geography of the place, the play reveals deep and complex psychological states that lead characters to their destinies. One of these states is the “hesitation of reality” (Mir 615) which is a status that leads characters to deny the reality and destroy the whole family. Moreover, the whole family seems not to be able to express themselves because of “the curse of alcohol” which makes them always oscillate between reality and imaginative situations.

Buried Child is a play that represents the status of individuals throughout the whole century. This play embodies the “geopathic figure” of the house of the family as a prison and gives hints about the places that characters reside at in the past and present. Shepard presents some concrete understandable places where the reader can recognize them; New

Mexico is an example where Tilden developed his new character. On the other hand, he presents a place that is concrete but ambiguous like the backyard where the reader and audience ask why the family buried the child there and characters still deal with the child as one of the family members.

In order to discover these spatial dimensions of the play, Ubersfiled (1999) states that “space at the level of the text can be defined according to a number of lexical determinations” (90). She discusses at length the “concrete steps one must take in order to determine the semio-lexical field of space in a given text”. She concludes that the reader “must take note of everything that might have a role in the identification of locality: place names (common nouns, geographical names) as well as lexical items indicative of spatial disposition(106-107).

Throughout Ubersfiled’s notes, we can explore Tilden’s “psychological territory”(INAN 16) as Shepard presents certain incidents that reflect or present the status of post-modern individual who is frustrated, fragmented, and lonely. Tilden is a middle aged American man who remembers or imagines his horrible past and his dreams which start to disappear gradually after his return to his father’s house. At the end of the play, the stage-space starts to reflect psychological sides of the characters. Tilden shows up while he holds the dead child in his hands in a scene that reveals the psychological sides of the play. The readers and audience feel a sense of confusion as Tilden’s fragmentation of memory refers to his dreams, memories, and ambitions which are related to the places that he lived in. This confusion comes from the relationship between the mind-space of Tilden which transfers as much as he experiences places and the real world as a member of the family. Tilden loses “contact with the world that his past imposes on him” (Crank 63). He struggles to find his identity through his memory and imagination. In spatial terms, in his relationship with the house and with the backyard, Tilden remembers the spaces and places of New Mexico where his enemies live. Tilden refers to certain named places such as the backyard

where he remembers his child and how the whole family contribute to his murder or the railway station and streets in New Mexico:

TILDEN: I was standing. It was night. I was full of the smell of New Mexico. It's different Than Illinois. Totally different. Foreign, almost. My lungs were full of it. Like pine smoke and mesquite. That was it. It was foreign. So I left there and I came back here. (He starts to leave.)

DODGE: Where are you going?

TILDEN: Out back.

DODGE: You're not supposed to go out there. You heard what she said. Don't play deaf with me!

TILDEN: I like it out there.

DODGE: In the rain?

TILDEN: Especially in the rain. I like the feeling of it. Feels like it always did.

DODGE: You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them.

TILDEN: What do you need?

DODGE: I don't need anything yet! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute! (DODGE starts to cough.)

TILDEN: I'll be right outside. You can just yell (34).

On the other hand, Tilden refers to abstract places like New Mexico the city which he refers to as "that place"(39). He describes it differently and makes the audience and readers explore his inner psychological world. Throughout these memories, Tilden has lost himself as more as he is trying to find himself again. Shepard maps Tilden's world by combining representation of places. At the end of the play, readers recognise that Tilden's mentioning of places is associated with a visionary or imaginary description or even memories that add to his description of these places which have psychological and historical implications. Shepard portrays the character of Tilden to reflect the real experience of ordinary man and

makes Tilden a symbol for the miserable life that individuals live through those years .Westphal argues that “The inability to fix a referent in a literary text makes the project of geocriticism all the more worthwhile, as the critic may look at the multiple variety of texts that refer to a place in order to shape the vision of the ‘real-and-imagined’ place as Soja has dubbed it” (6).

In other words, The play takes place at a country house on a farm in America. Buy time and place of the play are ambiguous because of the universal sense that the play gives to its readers and audience. This universality that Westphal refers to make the play representative of all places and times. (Michiko 69). For example, Halie starts the play with her fragmented memories that give a sense beyond any reference as Westphal expresses. Buried Child is a text in which real and imaginative places represent the outside conflict in certain society. Shepard reflects a world different from the worlds of the readers and audience and even surpasses them. He gives them the chance of feeling it. Westphal states that ”the referentiality of fiction allows it to point to a recognizable place, real or imaginary or a bit of both at once, while also transforming that place, making it part of a fictional world”(12).

Conclusion

Throughout the spatial representation in the play, Sam Shepard highlights the Peculiarities of the era that he lives in. Buried Child is a play that reflects the spatial Anxieties of the age itself. It depicts the social and economic situations in the Postmodern society which Shepard highlights through the character of Tilden . Sam Shepard gives his readers a picture of Life through his characters by highlighting the disparity between represented places And spaces in the real world and the fictional spaces that the characters create in their Thirdspace. Throughout the framework of geocriticism, this study highlights the Geographical and space-oriented incidents in Buried Child and concludes that these Incidents reflect the status of postmodern human who seems alienated, separated, and

Displaced. This study focuses on how Shepard's *Buried Child* Helps to rediscover what is going on in the real world. It provides a kind of Reflection through the characters who embody the situation of a Postmodern individual who feels lost and displaced. Throughout the general setting Of the play, Shepard gives the readers an accurate representation that provides them With a frame and mental image of the place which helps them to connect the world of The play with their real world and by doing so, they will understand their real world Throughout the depicted spaces in the play which is the main function of geocriticism.

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