Chapter Two
Theories of Masculinities

There is no single or simple origin to masculinity, and that it cannot be isolated as beginning in a single place or at a single point. Rather, it is constantly created and challenged in numerous ways.

This study will be based on an analytical reading of Sam Shepard’s selected plays, along with critical books, articles, essays, and notes on his works. It will offer an analysis of the selected plays of Sam Shepard from a gender perspective and therefore will take into its ambit theories of masculinity, for example, crisis of masculinity and various types of masculinities such as hegemonic, traditional, de-traditional, subordinate, marginalized, complicit, protest, effeminate, emasculated, and female masculinity proposed by social theorists such as British sociologist Anthony Giddens, Australian sociologist R.W. Connell, and some other leading theorists of masculinity studies. In addition, the study will take into account the critical discourse analysis emphasizing Michel Foucault’s ideas concerning gender construction and finally ideological approach with an emphasis on Althusser’s views of the issue. All these approaches turn to be anti-essentialist rather than essentialist and to be almost equally important but the concentration of study will mostly be on the gendered based approaches. Thus, much more attention will be paid to masculinity study as the prominent interdisciplinary approach.

Distinct from the biologically determined sex, gender is associated with the complex ways in which sexual difference is lived out socially, politically, and culturally. The concept of gender is determined through social and historical production of the norms, codes of behavior and defined social roles that culture attributes to different members of society. Gender theorists have made
Masculinity, as an identity category, refers to the cultural characteristics associated with being a man. Masculinity is “a discursive-performative construction that describes and disciplines the cultural meaning of being a man” (Barker 115). Masculinity is not an essential quality of personified subjects but a matter of representation. It is constituted by ways of speaking about and disciplining bodies. Masculinity is a location of constant political struggle over meaning in the context of multiple modes of being a man. In Western culture the current period may be the first time in which some men are seeing themselves as possessing a problematic masculinity. The sense that masculinity is not a natural entity has led to increasing interest for research on men and masculinity. Cultural representations of men and masculinity, the character of men’s lives as they experience them and the problems that men face in contemporary culture are focused on in the current period. Traditional masculinity has emphasized on the values of reason, strength, power, stoicism, action, control, independence, self-sufficiency, comradeship and work amongst others. Verbal ability, domestic life, tenderness, emotiveness and communication are not recognized. Traditional values of masculinity may not serve men well any more in contemporary period and a number of critics now have a discussion about a crisis of masculinity. In the West, a large number of men at some point in their lives are concerned with despair, depression, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, suicide, and crime. “Some of the problems men face can be understood to be an outcome of the incompatibility between ascendant notions of masculinity and that which is required to live contentedly in the contemporary social world. It has been argued that the central problems of men’s lives are rooted in the adoption of impossible images of masculinity that men try, but fail, to live up to” (Barker 115).

Men’s studies or masculinity studies is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning men, masculinity, gender, and politics. Men’s studies, as a relatively new field of study, was shaped chiefly in response to an emerging men’s rights movement--itself a response to advantages brought to women by feminist political action--and has been taught in academic settings only since the 1970s. Men’s studies often encompasses contemporary debates on men’s
rights, masculinity, feminist theory, queer theory, matriarchy, patriarchy, and, more generally, the social, historical, and cultural constructions of male identity.

In the current decades men and their identification with masculinity have gone into crisis. However, the nature of this crisis is not precise. Crisis denotes the changes in the implications of masculinity and even about the possibilities of reshaping male interests that have been occurring in the given moment of time. To comprehend the importance of crisis for changing hegemonic masculinity, it is essential to know the nature of the historical dynamics of the gender order which has led to the contemporary moment. The phenomenon of a crisis of masculinity is not limited to contemporary period. Even in the earlier historical moments the defining characteristics of the gender order especially masculinity and its associated cultural representations have been under intense scrutiny. This happening in itself has led to crisis in gender practices. For example, in late seventeenth century England women became ambivalent about the idea of marriage and family since they regarded marriage and domesticity as confining them to a position of sexual slave and not allowing them to reach economic equality and constructing a sense of self-sufficiency. Women’s challenge to acquire paid work and liberate themselves from domestic segregation made men generally worried about their own socially expected positions as husband and family chief.

Masculinity studies as a form of gender studies scholarship focuses upon critical studies of masculinity. Anthony Giddens, theorist and social critic, has developed a very general theory of the social changes that have amplified the importance of personal and group identities in industrial societies. Giddens believes that the formation of identities in contemporary societies has changed fundamentally. His notion is that in advanced industrial societies or high modernity the way people construct their identities has changed under the influence of globalization. He also shows that social and ideological changes around men’s identities have increased the notion that masculinity is in crisis and needs to be investigated socially. Regarding crisis of masculinity, Edwards remarks:

It is now not uncommon in populist and academic circles alike to talk of a crisis of masculinity, yet what this actually means remains unclear. One of the causes of this
confusion is the sheer profusion of uses and applications of the concept. Consequently, it
is seen to refer to factors as diverse as the impact of second-wave feminism on men,
competition with women either at school or at work, the escalating levels of violent acts
men are seen to commit, anxieties concerning how men should act within the home or
within personal relationships, the representation of men in negative terms in the media, or
the undermining of traditional male sex roles. What constitutes a crisis as such is equally
unclear. In particular, the concept of crisis is used to incorporate a sense of panic or
anxiety that on the one hand has already happened or on the other might happen, and is
applied equally to masculinity as a concept or to the experiences of men themselves. (6)

The masculinity crisis entails the disintegration of the basic pattern of the traditional code of
masculine mannerism. The solution to crisis of masculinity does not signify a progressive
movement. It merely represents men who function as the dominative hegemonic group and
attempt to reclaim traditional authority over those who would seek to challenge their position as
hegemonic masculinity and its key hegemonic principles. Therefore, “it represents a
regressive/restorative force that emerges under the guise of change” (Howson 79).

Anthony Giddens as the leading theorist of masculinity studies—a form of gender studies
scholarship which focuses upon critical studies of masculinity. Much of Giddens’ recent writing
has been concerned with mapping the different effects of traditional, modern and advanced
industrial societies on human identity. Giddens develops a theory of de-traditionalisation as a
central force in the production of critical social reflections on identity and the formation of
identity movements. Giddens’ de-traditionalisation thesis connects directly to notions about the
decoupling of men’s identity from its traditional image through processes of modernisation. This
theory identifies important factors that have impacted on men’s identity in contemporary
societies. Giddens claims that in traditional societies the individual’s actions were guided by
habit, custom, long established social mores. Traditional ways of life, he argues, gave individuals
a coherent life narrative and a sense of a secure identity. Therefore in traditional societies,
according to Giddens, identity was not a matter that required extensive reflection by individuals.
Traditional societies ‘held up’ a model of identity for different social categories or groups and
individuals identified with these models without much reflection. The space for personal
decision-making and lifestyle choices was therefore highly limited in societies wherein tradition acted as a guide to action. Giddens argues that in modern societies traditional ways of life were subjected to scrutiny. According to Giddens, the constitution of identities in contemporary societies has changed radically.

In men’s studies, scholars give great importance to the areas of work, family, violence, sexuality, health and culture. In the current situation, labor, power, authority, non-emotiveness and aggression represent the key defining aspects of the nature and function of masculinities. Principles of heterosexuality, breadwinning and aggressiveness are fundamental to the understanding of masculinities. The result is a belief that when it is needed enforcing the characteristics such as rationality, non-emotiveness, authoritarianism and competitiveness through violent and coercive means are legitimate and normative. The principle of aggression is fundamental to masculinity practice. Thus, the exploitation of violence as a means of defeating challenges and crises is justified in dominative projection of hegemonic masculinity. “Durability or survivability of non-hegemonic patterns of masculinity may represent well-crafted response to race/ethnic marginalization, physical disability, class inequality, or stigmatized sexuality” (Connell and Messerschmidt 848).

In his famous book *Masculinities*, R. W. Connell identifies four patterns of masculinity in the current Western gender order: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization.

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. (Connell and Messerschmidt 832)

Connell considers hegemony in gender as “a system of relations and practices controlled and directed by a dominative and asymmetrically operating force” (Howson 73). Hegemonic masculinity represents the ideal masculinity and the yardstick for standard gender practice.
Reeser in his book *Theories of Masculinities* quotes from R.W Connell: “Hegemonic masculinity is ‘the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’” (77).

Discussions on hegemonic masculinity started gaining importance in sociology in the 1980s. The term was associated with hegemony, which had become popular in social class discussion. After some research on this subject it was confirmed that there were the plurality of masculinities. In 1993, Donaldson in his essay entitled “What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?” remarked that:

Twenty years ago, Patricia Sexton suggested that ‘male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body.’ It is only relatively recently that social scientists have sought to link that insight with the concept of hegemony, a notion as slippery and difficult as the idea of masculinity itself. (644)

In 20th-century political science, the concept of hegemony proposed by Italian Marxist and intellectual Antonio Gramsci is essential to cultural hegemony, a philosophical and sociological theory saying that one social class can manipulate the system of values and mores of a society in order to create and establish a ruling-class worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that justifies the present situation of bourgeois domination upon the other social classes of the society. Hegemony is “the domination of a set of ruling beliefs and values through ‘consent’ rather than through ‘coercive power’” (Bertens 68). The term hegemony refers to:

the cultural or intellectual domination of one school of thought, social or cultural group or ideology over another (or others). In defining hegemony, Gramsci relates the concept of manifestations of social coercion. This is explained through discussion of the state. For Gramsci, the state comprises political society and civil society. The dominant social group maintains its hegemonic control over subordinate or subaltern social groups not only through the non-coercive assertion of its cultural values and beliefs, but also through
Hegemonic masculinity refers to a culturally normal and ideal male behavior. The term hegemonic masculinity has roots in the assumption that there is a hierarchy of masculine behavior, suggesting it as a fact that most societies encourage men to exemplify a dominant version of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a competitive entity. It embodies a tendency for males to try to dominate other males and subordinate females. Oppression, exploitation, power and social control presents a more prevailing description of the constraints that operate in personality and in social organization, and of the manner in which the two levels are connected in the process of being reproduced. As the proponents of this theory suggest, it is not essentially the most customary form of male expression, but rather the most socially approved masculinity that contributes to the subordinate position of women. Sociologists valued some traits as associated with male individuals such as drive, ambition, claims to self-reliance, aggression, and heterosexuality but devalued these characteristics in females in contemporary Western society. Researchers have also revealed that to be more masculine is to become less feminine.

A worldwide growing interest concerning the issues of men and masculinity has come into existence in the recent years. This noticeable interest and concern in the community of men and masculinity is reverse to the more traditional belief that “discussing masculine emotionality, work and power, for example, is of little social importance because, for many men, to normatively express their masculinity they simply had to work hard, provide for their family and remain tough through the hard times” (Howson 1).

The whole academic interest in doing research about issues of men and masculinity has led to the heterogeneous knowledge encompassing diverse discourses of masculinity. A key figure who has done comprehensive research on men and masculinity is the Australian sociologist, R.W. Connell. “whose rejection of the conceptual singularity of masculinity has opened up new possibilities for understanding it as a socially constructed multiplicity” (Howson 2).
Connell argues that there exists within the multiplicity of masculinities a largely representative, justifiable, rightful, legitimate and ideal type of masculinity. This type of ideal masculinity which is called hegemonic masculinity emerges and develops from the social and cultural setting, becomes essentialised and finally acts as the yardstick against which all men must measure their success in the gender order.

Hegemonic masculinity, particularly as it appears in the works of Carrigan, Connell and Lee, Chapman, Cockburn, Connell, Lichterman, Messner and Rutherford involves a specific strategy for the subordination of women. In their view, hegemonic masculinity concerns the dread of and flight from women. A culturally idealised form, it is both personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most benefit from it. Although cross-class, it often excludes working-class, gay and black-men. It is a lived experience, and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements. It is constructed through difficult negotiation over a life-time. Fragile it may be, but it constructs the most dangerous things we live with. (Donaldson 645)

The concept of hegemonic masculinity “is an attempt to synthesise some of the fundamental ideas from Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, such as the emphasis on socio-cultural and ideological structures and processes, the importance of history as a generative force and recognition of praxis or the nexus between theory and practice, with his own practice-based masculinities theory” (Howson 5).

Gender is a relational entity. It is not viewed as dichotomy or two separately homogenous categories of masculinity and femininity. Different social relations that functions between men, between men and women and between women and women at any moment results in various key gender types of masculinities and femininities. Connell’s masculinities theory indicates that gender is a practice. “Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e.,
things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Multiple, hierarchical, unstable and persistent nature is intrinsic to contemporary gender ordering.

Hegemonic masculinity as an ideal type dominates all other gender types of the Western world in the contemporary gender order. Its major characteristics including whiteness, heterosexuality, independence, rationality, middle class status, education, a competitive nature, the desire and the skill to achieve desired objectives, aggression, and mental and physical strength or toughness are all extremely privileged and desired in the community and must be protected. On the other hand, although hegemonic masculinity may represent the yardstick for gender, its essential and defining characteristics are not always the most common for men or women to assume and identify with in the actual life. Despite existing problems, the ideal characteristics continue to be legitimate and desired. Existence of hegemonic masculinity indicates that there is always an underlying struggle in which these hegemonic characteristics must continue to be privileged over all others. Through this, hegemonic masculinity protects the balance of power in favor of men. Hegemonic masculinity secures the ascendant position of men over women. In any sense of the word, traditionally accepted common practices such as heterosexual relationship, men as employed person, men as breadwinner of family, and the socio-cultural rejection of men’s emotive position and acceptance of aggressive position must be continually advocated as key defining principles within the hegemonic masculine characteristics, which are organized so as to guarantee the continuation of the dominative masculine hegemony.

Subordinate and marginalized masculinities are considered to be the primary forms of subaltern other for the ascendant and dominant form of masculinity, i.e. hegemonic masculinity. The demarcation of these subaltern forms within masculinities theory is based on their relation with other structures such as race, ethnicity, class and sexuality, which are culturally formed.

Subordinate masculinities emerge as a product of a particular relation some men have within the structure of sexuality that inverts the hegemonic cathetic focus towards the feminine (as heterosexuality) back upon the masculine (as homosexuality). The hegemonic conception of homosexuality emphasizes gender differences more so than the
actual difference in sexual orientation. In other words, the characteristics inherent to the practice of homosexuality mark these men with a visible form of non-masculinity or effeminacy that blurs the required clear-cut gender delineations (Connell 1995: 79). So, for example, dress sense, speech and demeanour, as well as overt sexuality, are the manifest symbols that contain such characteristics as expressiveness and emotiveness, passivity and domesticity, weakness and lack of authority that are anathema to the dominative masculine hegemony. (Howson 62)

The particular practices that illustrate subordinate masculinity oppose hegemonic masculinity since they well represent whatever is expelled by hegemonic masculinity. In addition to homosexual men, some heterosexual men also are included in the category of subordinate masculinities since they deviate from the masculine-feminine dichotomy through their appearance, traits, mannerisms, even their work, effeminacy and weakness. Reeser is interested in “how hegemonic masculinity employs subordination for various ends, how it is indistinguishable from it from time to time. How, for instance, does one explain that the most hegemonic of male subjects can take on certain aspects of subordinate masculinities, as when they joke about being gay, dress as women, or appropriate African-American masculine traits?” (15).

Subordinate masculinities and marginalised masculinities are differentiated from each other through social relations that identify them. “Subordinate masculinities are linked uniquely to cathectic relations structured around sex” (Howson 63). These relations have been labelled as abnormal and are excluded from the hegemonic realm. On the other hand, marginalised masculinities develop through social relations which are structured around the concepts of race, class and ethnicity. Even though men as a group benefit from constitutional rights, they do not share equally the advantages of these rights.

For example, the marginalisation of working-class masculinity in the current situation was driven by changes in technology, education and work practices that gave rise to middle-class and professional masculinities which, in turn, emphasised career and status achievements, intellectual ability, determination for success, fatherhood and
breadwinning, as well as a new emphasis on fashion, grooming and appearance. The effect of re-configuring the traditional hegemonic ideal based on hard work, toughness, and/or a carefree homosocial existence was that for many traditional working-class men the new emphasis left them confused and in a tenuous position with regards to their own sense of identity and place. (Howson 63)

The subordination and marginalization of men are always products of their relations to those men who try to function closely according the hegemonic ideal. However a dominative hegemony does not look for the complete destruction of all opposing forces. So “there will always be configurations of practice and relations that, while challenging the existing hegemony, are nevertheless allowed to exist” (Howson 63).

Huge numbers of men do not exemplify the ideals of hegemonic, subordinate or marginalized masculinities in their gender practice. This group represents *complicit masculinity.*

Men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. It was in relation to this group, and to compliance among heterosexual women, that the concept of hegemony was most powerful. Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.

These concepts were abstract rather than descriptive, defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal gender system. They assumed that gender relations were historical, so gender hierarchies were subject to change. Hegemonic masculinities therefore came into existence in specific circumstances and were open to historical change. More precisely, there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This was the element of optimism in an otherwise rather bleak theory. It was perhaps possible that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies. (Connell and Messerschmidt 832-33).
Thus, complicit masculinities are often regarded as “lesser versions of the hegemonic ideal. . . .

In contrast to subordinate and marginalised masculinities, the potential for complicit masculinities to challenge the principles expressed in hegemonic masculinity, even at the level of conjuncture or politics, is much weaker than other subaltern masculinities” (Howson 65). Complicit masculinities do not always take on the full hegemonic masculine ideal since there is always the possibility that they will assume and manifest specific characteristics that reduce the wholesomeness of the domimative hegemonic scheme, especially at the personal level. The demonstration of this mannerism is enclosed in protest masculinity.

Protest masculinities, while being structurally complicit at the personal level, challenge the defining hegemonic principles by expressing behaviours such as deep affection for children, egalitarian attitudes towards the sexes and a sense of personal hygiene and fashion that, traditionally, was attached to subordinate masculinities and femininities. . . . In effect, protest masculinities construct a relation of alliance between complicit and the other subaltern masculinities and femininities. (Howson 65)

Protest masculinity can be understood as “a pattern of masculinity constructed in local working-class settings, sometimes among ethnically marginalized men, which embodies the claim to power typical of regional hegemonic masculinities in Western countries, but which lacks the economic resources and institutional authority” (Connell and Messerschmidt 847- 48). In spite of the fact that there exists protest masculinities, men who are classified as complicit masculinity often replace the idea of challenging the hegemonic principles by an inclination to compromise.

Masculinity is complicated because of its “innumerable variations in time and in space. . . . Such cross-cultural or cross-temporal differences make us aware of masculinity as particularly relative” (Reeser 2). Todd W. Reeser in his revolutionary book entitled Masculinities in Theory claims that four masculinity categories of hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization identified by R. W. Connell are unstable. One advantage of his way of examining masculinity is that it contributes to destabilize stereotypes of masculinity. “A stereotype of masculinity is an attempt to stabilize a subjectivity that can never ultimately be stabilized” (Reeser 15). Reeser remarks that he avoids the term identity and instead he uses the
term \textit{subjectivity} since it is often taken as “a less stable equivalent of identity and suggests complications and a closer relation to cultural and psychological influences”. He uses terms such as \textit{male subject}, \textit{masculine subjectivity} and \textit{male subjectivity} to suggest instabilities and influences (13).

Reeser adds some configurations to Connell’s categories including emasculation, male effeminacy, and non-male masculinity or female masculinity.

In his discussion of “Masculinity in Disguise”, Reeser discusses “a different way in which masculinity is performed”. He focuses on “how male subjects construct their gender subjectivity by embracing or appropriating what might seem antithetical to masculinity, especially traits ascribed to women, gay men, or lesbians”. Like masculinity, \textit{effeminacy} is unstable. A man can acquire woman-like traits or effeminacy to accomplish his objectives which are non-hegemonic. These characteristics include physical ones such as appropriating aspects of the female body or cross-dressing such as breasts, breastfeed and pregnancy, wearing a low-cut dress, large fake breasts, too much make up to indicate “a desire to understand other”; to affirm “masculinity by contrast”; “to outdo women”; “to gain access to an all female space”; to overcome “castration anxiety through the fetish” and finally aims to “remasculinize”. (Reeser 119-24).

\textit{Effeminacy} often signifies the threat of a man becoming like a woman, but effeminacy is not necessarily the opposite of masculinity. A man’s fear of becoming effeminate does not have to mean that he is not masculine, and a man can lack masculinity and still fear effeminacy. A man can be both very masculine and very feminine at the same time. Effeminacy and emasculation, while often taken as synonymous, also point to separate aspects of gender. Being like a woman and being unlike a man are not necessarily equivalent. (Reeser 120)

Gardiner in his work \textit{Masculinity studies and feminist theory} states that emasculation is more precisely related to castration in that etymologically it also means to cut out the male member, to castrate and remove their testicles. Emasculation becomes a metaphor for itself, as it comes to signify any practice that diminishes men’s masculine power, vigor, strength in the family or in
society and weakens them (311). Figuratively when a man loses his power and falls from his status as a dominant male figure he becomes emasculated. Emasculated form of masculinity is frequently linked with weakness, inability, helplessness, and failure to control, dominate, or rule over the others.

In his discussion of “Non-Male Masculinities”, Reeser quotes from Eve Sedgwick “sometimes masculinity has got nothing to do with . . . men”. Reeser explains what occurs “when masculinity is not directly or naturally connected to a body coded as male” (131).

Masculinity is not an embodied experience. It exists outside of a specified type of body. So defining characteristics of masculinity such as power, strength or toughness can be considered with no regard to the sex of the body that possesses them.

The female body can acquire the same training skills as the male body. For instance, females may successfully operate as female soldiers or female bodybuilders in military skills or sports fields respectively. This makes one to contemplate masculinity not possessed in or confined to the body of male individuals. “Natural links between supposedly masculine traits and male bodies can continue to be destabilized. Masculinity inscribed on the female body is not simply male masculinity transposed, however, but should be viewed as another type of masculinity that may nonetheless have connections to male masculinity” (Reeser 132). Female masculinities such as tomboys, female bodybuilders, and lesbians is understood differently ‘by women who exhibit it or by others, or in cultural discourses . . . from the reception of its male counterpart simply by virtue of being housed in a female body”. (Reeser 132)

Female masculinity can be a stratagem to give power and chance to women to move into the territory of traditional masculinity which was always occupied by men. As there is an anxiety about male effeminacy, female masculinity may cause a cultural anxiety about what a woman is or is supposed to be in the cultural context. It may also cause a warning that men will lose their hold on masculinity. “Negative responses to women who exhibit masculinity help insure men’s domination over masculinity, making them its sole purveyor. . . . Part of the anxiety created
stems from the fact that, like effeminacy, female masculinity destabilizes imagined binary
oppositions between male masculinity and female femininity” (Reeser 132-33).

Even though female masculinity is considered to be a threat to male masculinity challenging its
hegemony and that there have been attempts to overlook or to repress non-male masculinity to
sustain the male body as the lone supplier of masculinity but women’s challenges to get hold of
masculinity may be considered positive by male masculinity:

Women’s attempts to have or to obtain masculinity may be considered positive by male
masculinity, as they imply that there is something very desirable about it. That some
women want to possess masculinity affirms its inherent value. One assumption behind
this attitude is that the move from femininity to masculinity is upward, unlike the move
from masculinity to femininity (often called ‘effeminacy’ and labeled as negative and
considered a move down). Sportswomen in traditionally male sports may be viewed
positively because they are seen as trying to become like men and to acquire masculinity.
(Reeser 137)

The goal of some non-male masculinities or female masculinities is not “to reach masculinity,
however, but to approach and then subvert it from within, to mimic it, in order to show that it is
not unapproachable” (Reeser 139).

Post-Structuralist thought looks at texts, texuality and discourse from the point of view of social
control, power structure and subversive practices.

*Discourse*, as a broadly used term, conveys the linguistic characteristics of a given cultural
phenomenon. Discourse is any utterance that involves a speaker and listener. This functioning
definition is used by many cultural theorists who explore the production of meaning as a social
process rather than as one based in the mind or through programmed rules of communication.
The term was also “used by Michel Foucault, for whom ‘discourse’ was the name of distinct
areas of knowledge (e.g. historiography, medicine, philosophy, psychiatry, etc.), the practices
and rules surrounding them, and the mode by which power works through the exercise of language and control over truth” (Szeman and Kaposy 533).

A discourse approach to gender and language aims to accommodate ideas of individual agency, and of gender (identity) as multiple, fluctuating, and shaped in part by language. This (in some ways post-structuralist) understanding crucially represents gender as variable, but, equally crucially, as both social and individual. In the ‘Introduction’ to her own edited collection, Gender and Discourse (1997), Wodak characterises gender, for the analyst, as the understanding of “how what it means to be a woman or to be a man changes from one generation to the next”, but also shows how this varies too with language users, i.e. “between different racialised, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes” (1997:4). (Litosseliti and Sunderland 6)

The analytical framework will be extended to include critical discourse analysis which defines discourse as a social practice. As Shepard’s works have all the ingredients of a social drama, it seems suitable to apply discourse analysis to them. For the present study in the discourse analysis of male identity in drama, I have also chosen Michel Foucault theories. Foucault views literature as a social discourse and phenomenon. He advocates an active engagement with the politics of knowledge and refuses to draw any line between text and various discourses of power, truth and representation. The use of the term discourse to describe modes of thought defined by cultural assumptions has become strongly associated with his works.

“Language is an instrument of communication, whose expression is discourse” (Mills 85). For Michel Foucault, the word discourse holds a special significance. For him it is an area of social knowledge, a system of statements through which the world can be known. It is a system of statements by which speakers and hearers, writers and readers come to an understanding about themselves and their relationship to one another. These discourses are hegemonic and they do not have any truth or reality outside the system which gives rise to them. According to Foucault:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances
which enable one to distinguish true and false statement, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Power/Knowledge 131)

And there is a general human tendency to follow these discourses mindlessly. In Foucault’s writings, discourse refers to self-contained systems of thought, belief, social or political practices, governed by internally accepted regulations and procedures. . . . It is a critical point about discourses that they can come and go; they contain no universal truths that hold over time. They are based on power relations, and these can alter (Sim 200).

Following Foucault, all societies “have procedures whereby the production of discourses is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed, and the purpose of these processes of discourse control is to ward off ‘powers and dangers’” (Hawthorn 73). “Foucault has taken the idea of discourse further than the identification of a language practice arising as a result of organizational or institutional forms in society” (Wolfrey, Robbins and Womack 65-66).

Foucault suggests that discourses may force beliefs, values on to others, “implying that rules of particular discourses do not just allow certain things to be said, but impose certain ways of looking upon the world on participants while excluding alternatives” (Hawthorn 74).

Gender can be seen as profoundly variable, and, even within an individual, multi-faceted and shifting. Gender study in linguistics has accordingly undergone a radical shift of focus from ‘gender roles’ and ‘gender differences’ to a focus on variable identities (femininities and masculinities) and on gender not only as an individual, or even social attribute, but also as contextualised, changing sets of practices. Discourse analysis of particular spoken and written texts can illuminate the range of ways in which gender identities are represented and constructed, performed and indexed, interpreted and contested. (Litosseliti and Sunderland 31)

The consideration of ideology in this study is necessitated since it seems clear that ideology, variously defined, is a near neighbor to discourse in Foucault’s understanding of the term and
that ideology strongly influences language use and discourse. Furthermore, masculinity is considered to be as an ideology since “it is often perceived as subjectivity linked to power”. “One way to understand the concept of masculinity as not created by any one person or by any single group is to consider masculinity as an ideology, a series of beliefs that a group of people buy into and that influences how they go about their lives” (Reeser 20). The theory of ideology as practice was developed by Louis Althusser.

The concept of hegemony was most notably used by the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci as a way of explaining how the ruling class in a capitalist society managed to impose its ideology on the mass of the population – most of the time without recourse to force. The structural Marxist theorist Louis Althusser later built on Gramsci’s ideas to suggest that Western societies consisted of various ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ (ISA). (Sim 235-36)

Rivkin quotes how Althusser considers “ideology to be a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (294). ISAs are institutions which produce ideologies and we as individuals internalize and act in accordance with. These ISAs include schools, religions, family, legal systems, politics, arts, media – organizations that create systems of ideas and values. All ideologies have the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects- of enlisting them in any belief system. The concept of dominant ideology as the political ideology that reigns in a particular context is connected with those in power.

Althusser developed the concept of interpellation or hailing as a social practice which is an all prevalent act working in insidious ways in everyday communication. Communication requires a sender and a receiver which places them in a social relationship. The addressee (receiver) by placing himself in that position participates in his own ideological construction. Althusser believes that ideology hails or interpolates individuals as subjects. Thus, ideology determines what it means to be a man and manifests masculine traits in a course of time.

As Reeser debates in Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction masculinity has innumerable variations in time and in space. It is more complicated than we might first believe and that it can
be studied not as a single definition, but as variety and complexity. When someone who is used to one definition goes somewhere else, whether on an actual trip or whether they travel by reading texts, surfing the web, watching films, or viewing paintings from another time period or cultural context, the range of masculinities comes into particular liberation. Such cross-cultural or cross-temporal differences make us conscious that masculinity is a relative issue. We come to conclude that what is taken to be established and approved is not at all fixed. It is only a fabrication of a construct of a given historical and cultural context (2). Being acknowledged of the variations of masculinities and theories associated with these diverse configurations of masculinities, this study applies varied theories associated with masculinity to Sam Shepard’s works in order to consider how the question of male subjectivity is staged by him, and how this staging reflects men’s social interactions which are powerful reflections of contemporary social systems.