Chapter Five

Crisis of Masculinity

Late Shepard (from 1990 onwards)

Masculinity is at once everywhere and yet nowhere, known and yet unknowable, had and yet un-have-able. In fact, to paraphrase Richard Dyer, it is not male sexuality but masculinity *per se* that ‘is a bit like air—you breathe it in all the time, but you aren’t aware of it much’.

EDWARDS

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of the three plays Sam Shepard has written during and after 1990: *States of Shock* (1991), *Simpatico* (1994), and *The Late Henry Moss* (2000) which involves a shift in the focus in that most emphasis is put on male/male relationship. Shepard’s plays dating from 1990 onwards continue his examination of the American family, the nature of father-son relationships, and the search for love and personal identity. Shepard’s long-held interest in male identity, machismo, aggression, violence, crisis of masculinity, male/male relationship, male/female relationship, and war both political and personal continues in these plays.

Prominent dramatists of the decade reflect a wide array of racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender categories (August Wilson, Tony Kushner, Suzan-Lori Parks, Jos’e Rivera, Terrence McNally, among others), suggesting a general critique of what has been termed white, male hetero-normativity. Shepard has been grouped with David Rabe and David Mamet as a white male playwriting triad. (Roudane 259)

Shepard’s plays from 1990 onwards demonstrate an outlook that distinguishes them from his more well-known works. *States of Shock, Simpatico,* and *The Late Henry Moss* express “a
concern for interconnectedness that is new to his writing, one that militates against individualism and ego assertion” (Roudane 259). These plays expose the harmful effects of egotism, of hegemonic masculinity and reveal a longing for affinity.

Shepard’s criticism usually deals with citing “the author’s obsession,” with characters “who writhe under social constraint and seek liberation through either physical flight or identity transformation” (Roudane 260). For such characters, signs of community are perceived as restraining and oppressive. In these plays one finds the impulse to shatter, a constant force to break social and familial structures, leading to an experience of the changing self and the world.

It is ironic that critics saw Shepard’s 1990s work as 1960s nostalgia, for Shepard had been immensely influential in the challenge to domestic realism, the (still prevailing) staple of the American stage. Shepard’s plays moved audiences into a surreal world in which the icons of American culture, including the nuclear family, became caricatures in an emerging, revisionary culture and a resistant dramatic form. (Schlueter 513)

Anthony Giddens claims that in traditional societies the individual’s actions were guided by habit, custom, long established social mores. He argues that traditional ways of life 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. According to Giddens, the constitution of identities in contemporary societies has changed radically. His thesis is that in advanced industrial societies or what he terms high modernity, the impact of globalization has changed the way people construct their identities. Giddens also illustrates that social and ideological changes around men’s identities increases the notion that masculinity is in crisis and requires societal investigation. Crisis of masculinity across western contemporary societies is marked by debates about the assumed changing social location of men and accompanying threatened male subjectivities. One of the manifestations of Crisis of masculinity is a fear that women are
challenging men at the heart of their identity—their manhood. The key terms that have emerged in popular discourses about the plight of the modern man have been crisis, loss and change. The crisis of masculinity thesis implies that the old certainties surrounding men’s traditional roles in the family and workplace have been swept away through social changes and increases in women’s equality, leaving the modern man dazed and confused about his roles and place in society. The qualities of manliness have also been framed as under threat, attacked and undermined. According to the crisis of masculinity, masculinity becomes an increasingly unstable position oscillating between traditional conditioning and contemporary demands and desires, never settling fully into either. At the heart of the crisis of masculinity that so interests Shepard is troubled manhood.

With a theoretical silence of six years after authoring *A Lie of the Mind* (1985), *States of Shock* premiered at The American Place Theatre on April 30, 1991 as an anti-war play and an ambiguous look at post-Vietnam America. “*States of Shock* is not simply a political tract; it is a fluid, dreamlike event of hypnotic, archetypal images, as full of visual poetry as it is of current politics” (DeRose 134). The stylistic devices of this one-act play subtitled *A Vaudeville Nightmare*, represents a radical shift from the lyrical realism of *A Lie of the Mind*. “It might actually be the beginning of a third period in Shepard’s writing, a combination of his early plays and his family plays, a period that Michael Feingold is hesitant to call ‘late period’” (Willadt 272). Regarding the stylistic point of view, *States of Shock* “reminds one of Shepard’s short, hallucinatory plays from the mid-1960s. Like those plays, it is more concerned with expressing a highly personal state of consciousness than with telling a story. Yet, like such later Shepard dramas as *Buried Child* and *Fool for love*, *States of Shock* is propelled by the unraveling of a family secret” (DeRose 134).

In this play nameless American the Colonel, “an archetypal military man; a firm believer in the myths of war that men like himself have served to perpetuate” (DeRose 134) and an amputee soldier named Stubbs arrive at a restaurant to celebrate the anniversary of the death of the colonel’s son. For the first time in Shepard’s play father is given central role and all other characters circle round him. In Shepard’s earlier works the son was at the center of the drama and father’s role was subordinate to the son’s leading character. The style and politics of the play
seem quite consciously reminiscent of the drama of the Vietnam era. *States of Shock* is the condemnation of both the American government’s military invasion of Iraq in 1991 and the submissive and self-righteous reaction of the American public to that invasion. It can be considered as the condemnation of modern civilization. In *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition* William Demastes remarks:

> In *States of Shock*, Shepard argues that America can no longer adhere to its rationalist, Newtonian vision of reality and behavior, certainly not in a post-Vietnam, post-Cold War, post-Desert Storm world. The chaos, randomness, and uncertainty of the current world (dis)order is pervasively inserted into the play by way of an upstage scrim, from which we hear the efforts of two percussionists and through which the silhouettes of scenes of war invade the action taking place in Danny’s family restaurant. (268)

“Spurred by his distaste with the public celebration of the 1991 Gulf War and its antiseptic satellite TV presentation, Shepard wrote *States of Shock* (1991), a stridently anti-war play that censures the valuation of aggression and conquest” (Krasner 298). In an interview with Carol Rosen Shepard is asked “What brought about *States of Shock*? Where did that come from?” He replies:

> I was in Kentucky when the war opened. I was in a bar... and it was stone silence. The TV was on, and these planes were coming in, and, suddenly... It just seemed like doomsday to me. I could not believe the systematic kind of insensitivity of it. That there was this punitive attitude—we’re going to just knock these people off the face of the earth. And then it’s devastating. Not only that, but they’ve convinced the American public that this was a good deed... The notion of this being a heroic event is just outrageous. I can’t believe that, having come out of the ’60s and the incredible reaction to Vietnam, [that voice] has all but disappeared. Vanished. There’s no voice any more.

> I wanted to create a character of such outrageous, repulsive, military, fascist demonism that the audience would recognize it, and say, ‘Oh, this is the essence of this thing’. (Rosen, *Sam Shepard* 235-36)
I thought Malkovich came pretty close to it. Just creating this monster fascist. (Witalec 270)

*States of Shock* seems to be the combination of Shepard’s early plays and his family plays. Regarding its form it is an outcome of *Action* and regarding its subject it reminds Shepard’s more recent naturalistic family plays. This *late Shepard* play is a kind of performance art including in the use of videos, sounds, music, dance and songs. Through visual and verbal imagery it conveys experimental atmosphere of reality and absurd. It is both political and personal. Having no real ending it puts the “reader/audience in a ‘state of shock’ by its pessimism and lack of solution” (Willadt 279).

Shepard’s plays have gone through various “phases,” from the early metadramatic experiments to the “rock” plays to the “family” dramas— and perhaps his most recent piece, *States of Shock* (1991), is the beginning of yet another period in Shepard’s career. But the division of Shepard’s drama into these phases does not signal a lack of continuity, nor should one necessarily make the argument that Shepard has “improved” (or diminished) in a linear fashion throughout his playwriting career. Shepard’s refusal to settles for the ordinary or the “traditional”, his willingness to go against theatrical convention, makes his drama consistently worth approaching. (Geis 45-46)

*States of Shock* focuses on male identity: What does it take to be a man or achieve a true male identity as an American man? Is he supposed to follow the archetypal male tradition and sacrifice his son? To pursue a true identity should he follow the role model of the father? Should he retain hegemonic masculinity attributes such as macho behavior, power, competition and aggressiveness, verbal and physical violence, possession of a sex object, and potency?

Shepard wrote *States of Shock*, a short play, during the Gulf War and it was staged at the American Place Theatre in 1991. Although it has taken a strong anti-war position, *States of Shock* is a naturalistic family play dealing only superficially with war in the political sense of the word. Even though it received harsh judgment, it indicates Shepard’s departure from the more conventional style of his family plays and a renovation of his theatrical genius. “Shepard has
finally become a victim of his most prominent personal and artistic obsession: his fascination with machismo and with the ‘mystery’ he finds solely in relationship between men’ (Willadt 271).

The drama is set in a middle-American restaurant into which the Colonel enters with Stubbs, a wheelchair-ridden veteran of some unnamed war. It is implied that Stubbs may be the officer’s son but the Colonel denies this claim. The emotional desolation experienced by these two main characters is depicted by the distressing turn of the drama, when it is reported that the youth’s injury was caused by friendly fire. “Stubbs emerges as a challenger to the war mentality and the many denials of his father” (Roudane 263).

*States of Shock* dramatizes a conflict between Colonel and Stubbs. “Their confrontation, enacted before symbolic representatives of the American public, suggests a battle between the patriarchal, pre-Vietnam myths of a righteous American military and the shattered, post-Vietnam realities of young men killed and traumatized in a costly and paranoid war of expansionism” (DeRose 134). The Colonel is angry and bad-tempered character whose volatile personality dominates the whole play and Stubbs is a young veteran who is bound to a wheelchair decorated with small American flags. Even though it is not directly said but it is implied that Stubbs is Colonel’s son. Colonel insists that his son has died in a heroic combat. He says Stubbs is his son’s best friend who was harshly wounded by friendly artillery fire while unsuccessfully trying to save the life of his son. “This is the man who attempted to save my son’s life by placing his body in the way of incoming artillery fire” (12) and then it is Stubbs who says: “It was friendly fire. It smiled in my face. I could see its teeth when it hit us. I could see its tongue” (31). Stubbs recollects events different from the way the Colonel does. He suggests that he was struck by his own forces when he was running from battle. Colonel has apparently brought Stubbs from a hospital to the restaurant to celebrate the anniversary of his son’s death. The conflict between Colonel and Stubbs intensifies when Colonel wants Stubbs to reenact the battle scene in which his son was killed and Stubbs was wounded, by means of toy soldiers, tanks, airplanes, cutlery as shore lines and a sugar dispenser as a mountain. Stubbs precisely suspects that Colonel cannot accept him as his son because he has returned from the war severely wounded and impotent “MY
THING HANGS LIKE DEAD MEAT!!!” (12). He does not embody the picture of a war hero and a real American man Colonel has in his mind.

States of Shock deals with the subject of war through a dramatization of a father-son conflict. “During the course of the play, the two men fight a duel-by-language that ends in a physically violent showdown typical of almost every Shepard play—to the sheer amazement and total lack of understanding of the two other customers in the restaurant, an older middle-class couple called the White Man and the White Woman” (Willadt 273).

Colonel’s acts of violence are mostly directed against Stubbs. He threatens to punish Stubbs every time Stubbs does not act the way Colonel expects him to. Colonel inquires total, absolute, unconditional obedience. He treats Stubbs as if he is a little boy: “Stubbs! Get back over here and clean up your mess or I’m going to have to spank you! Do you want a good spanking? Is that what you want? A good solid thrashing. Maybe that’s what you need.” (27). At first, Colonel is just verbally violent, but later on he whips Stubbs savagely with a belt, spanks him or slaps him in the face (28). Every time, Colonel functions violently, his actions are accompanied by the sounds of explosions and by the pictures of war displayed on the cyclorama. “Shepard makes the connection between male violence and war obvious, but he also makes it clear that, for him, the real war rages on a personal, interhuman level” (Willadt 276).

Stubbs has survived unnamed war just to come home and fight another one and this one is really vital for him. He has to fight his most horrible enemy: his father. For both men this fight is a matter of life and death. Both men repeatedly agree to the fact that “WITHOUT THE ENEMY WE’RE NOTHING!” (15). “For them, only male competition and aggressiveness lead to a truly male identity, and this is what both men are aiming at. Colonel’s inability to understand and, what is more important, accept his son for what he is, has killed Stubbs” (Willadt 275). Stubbs believes that Colonel has invented his death: “I remember the moment you forsook me. The moment you invented my death. That moment has lasted all my life. . . . You had my name changed! YOU INVENTED MY DEATH” (39-40). Later he says: “Best way is to kill all the sons. Wipe them off the face of the earth. Bleed them of all their blood. Let it pour down into the soil. Let it fill every river. Every hole in this earth. Let it pour through every valley. Flood every
town. Let us drown in the blood of our own. Let us drown and drink it. Let us go down screaming in the blood of our sons” (44). Stubbs is afraid that Colonel will wipe out, or erase him: “But you’ll try to forget me? To wipe me out? . . . You will never erase me completely” (35-36). “The military leaders who order their soldier boys/sons to sacrifice themselves in battle provide an excellent metaphor for the law of the father that oppresses and ‘erases’ its individual sons in its all-out obsession with ‘making’ men in order to uphold and police the code of patriarchy” (McDonough 67). “It is not the bullet that hit him and left a hole in his chest, but rather his father’s betrayal that has put him into a complete ‘states of shock’” (Willadt 275). Stubbs says: “When you left me it went straight through me and out the other side. It left a hole I can never fill” (24). There is an allusion to the Bible when Stubbs says: “Abraham, maybe. Maybe Abraham. Judas” Apparently “Colonel is following an archetypal male tradition that goes back to Bible” (Willadt 275). He was eager to sacrifice Stubbs in the War believing that fighting in a war is a manly and valiant deed.

To prove that he is a real man and worthy to be Colonel’s son, Stubbs starts to flirt with Glory Bee, a waitress, whom the Colonel is fond of and finally feels his thing, his long lost manhood, coming back. “Through the course of the play he becomes remasculated literally (by recovering his ability to have an erection)” (Demastes, Realism 271). His thing also brings back his memory and finally gives him a stronger position in his conflict with Colonel. At the end, Colonel still does not want to admit that Stubbs is his son, but he admits that they could be “somehow remotely related” (42). Colonel feels he is losing his control over the situation and, most of all, over Stubbs. “His control over his world crumbles. Shortly after his speech on laziness, the Colonel loses both Stubbs and the girl he dreams of marrying (Glory Bee)” (Demastes, Realism 272). To escape the danger of losing his control and power over Stubbs, Colonel promises to take him back and even to “make it official” but Stubbs seems to be determined finally to free himself from Colonel (45).

A role change happens at the end of the play. Stubbs must employ violence to quell the violence of his father. Suddenly, Stubbs is back up on his feet staggering around the stage and Colonel who sits in the wheelchair (38). To reject Stubbs being his son and to prove he is the only man, Colonel mentions to Stubbs impotence: “No son of mine has a ‘thing’ like that. It’s not possible“
Then Stubbs rolling on the floor with Glory Bee says: “My thing is coming back!” (42). Both men try to prove their manhood with the use of a woman, Glory bee.

Glory Bee is the sex object and ready to be used whenever Stubbs and Colonel are in need. First she shows willingness to serve Colonel when he is in control. Then he becomes the object of competition for Colonel and Stubbs. Glory’s name has been used symbolically by the dramatist in that it is a name but it has more meaning than naming a person with. It is the glory if either of both men wins Glory. She is an objective for two protagonists through whom they can prove their manhood. Sexual potency is an imperative requirement for masculinity, for being a true man.

*States of Shock* has no real ending or solution. Like Lee and Austin in *True West*, the two male protagonists in *States of Shock* stand frozen in a position of everlasting confrontation and enmity. It is not clear whether Stubbs will kill the Colonel. At the end it is Stubbs who stands behind Colonel and holds him in a strong hold. He then releases his hold and grabs Colonel’s sword in both hands and is going to decapitate the Colonel, but then freezes in that posture. He finally proves that he has become a real man using violence against Colonel. Stubbs has found his male identity. As a celebration of this happy situation all the characters on stage, except Stubbs, again start singing “Good night Irene” (46). “*States of Shock* deals with ‘states of shock’ on several levels, the political as well as the personal and individual. The play’s initial metaphor is no doubt taken from the Gulf War. But, the real war that is going on in this play takes place on battlefields known from former Shepard plays: in the family (between male family members), and between sexes” (Willadt 274).

*States of Shock* takes place in a family restaurant somewhere in the south of the United States. The play is dominated by the figure of the Colonel who “voices hawkish allegiance to jingoistic ‘principles’ and ‘codes’”. He is dressed in a pastiche of military styles and marks the anniversary of his son’s death in combat by bringing a crippled war veteran, Stubbs, to an all-American style diner for ice cream” (Roudane 262). Other characters are present there: a waitress, Glory Bee, and two customers, the White Man and White Woman. Through the course of the play, it becomes apparent that an unspecified war is happening outside which threatens to intrude upon
the diner as well as war between characters. The real war that is going on in this play takes place on battlefields in the family between male family members and between the sexes, female and male. “All the characters on stage seem to have learned to live in a ‘state of war’ and accept it as something quite normal” (Willadt 274).

Even though in *States of Shock* more emphasis ostensibly is put on male-male relationship than female-male relationship, the relationship between male and female characters needs much consideration. Two worlds, of course, in small scales are depicted on the stage: one is traditional and the other modern in a sense. The part displaying Colonel, Stubbs and Glory Bee is displaying to the reader/audience the traditional world and the part in which a couple, the White Woman and White Man are staged is displaying modern world. The two worlds are in sharp contrast. Indeed, traditional long-held interest in male strength, aggression, competitiveness, sexual conquest, and violent display is portrayed counter to the male sensibility, passiveness, and tenderness of the modern world.

One of the most remarkable visual images of the play is the presence on stage of the White Woman and White Man—the elderly, ostensibly affluent couple dressed in white. The White Man is subjected to the cruelty of the White Woman as superior and dominant. It seems that Manliness in its macho sense has disappeared. “Female masculinity is a threat to male masculinity, a challenge to its hegemony” (Reeser 137). The White Man is good example of the feminized, de-traditionalized masculinity. The Couple sit at a white table and wait for a long overdue order of clam chowder. Disconnected and unmoved, they watch father and son debate as the terrible cost of war. They act as symbolic scenic elements and are occasionally annoyed at the minor troubles which the war and its outcome have caused them. They are mostly interested in the clam chowder they have ordered or in the shopping they could do instead of sitting there waiting much time for clam chowder and observing the conflict between the Colonel and Stubbs. They reveal distressed impotence and bitterness behind their exterior indifference when the Colonel savagely beats Stubbs and as the beating progresses the white woman persuades the Colonel to behave like a proper parent and strike again and the white man masturbates. When the Colonel slaps Stubbs across the face, the White Woman becomes interested in what is going around her. She seems to enjoy this very much. She says: “Give it to him! You should have done
that when he was just a little boy. All of this could have been avoided” (25). Later on she acquires machismo posture revealing her female masculinity when she yells at the White Man and finally “whacks him across the head with her purse” (40). “When masculinity is taken as a disembodied phenomenon, existing on its own outside the confines of a given type of body, then traits ascribed to masculinity—such as power or virility—can be considered on their own terms, without regard for the sex of the body possessing them” (Reeser 131). This display of violence is also accompanied by the sound of “An explosion in the distance” (40). The White man does not react. He is obviously subservient to his wife’s violence and aggression. He is completely passive and under the control of White Woman. “Like effeminacy, female masculinity destabilizes imagined binary oppositions between male masculinity and female femininity” (Reeser 133). Attempting to save his masculinity both as reaction to contemptuous behavior of the White Woman and Colonel’s brutal action toward Stubbs, he masturbates. “Stubbs turns his wheelchair toward White Man and moves toward him, then stops. He blows his whistle. White Man continues masturbating. White Woman keeps eating” (27). Three times Stubbs tells White Man: “BECOME A MAN!” (27). The White Man feels his manhood is in crisis and tries to save his machismo posture through masturbation proving himself as potent and healthy but manhood takes its last breath in modern world. Even changing roles of Colonel and Stubbs as dominant person is a good proof that masculinity and manliness in its traditional sense is under threat, unstable and in crisis.

Although female masculinity should not be seen as male masculinity simply transposed onto another sex, reactions to female masculinity are nonetheless related to, or prompted by, male masculinity. We have seen that the desire to keep masculinity male is central to this link. But also, in a cultural context in which anxiety about male effeminacy is acute, a negative reaction to female masculinity may be the transfer of the fear of emasculation onto women’s supposed gender dissonance. These two anxieties may simply be part of a larger attempt to (re)construct a binary gender system. (Reeser 134)

Another character in the play is a black waitress named Glory Bee. Her name is symbolic having more meaning than only naming a person. It both reflects her belief in America as the land of promise and the glory two male protagonists attempt to achieve. Glory Bee, the waitress,
repeatedly walks across the stage in slow motion serving coffee, Banana splits and clam chowder to her customers. She adds much distraction to the play with her singing, dancing with Colonel, rolling around on the floor with Stubbs. She is a good example of stock character. She serves a stereotypical function in the play. She is there to arouse erotic sensation in men especially cause Stubbs’s potency to be revitalized. Her sexual function is her most important function and it does not matter if she as a waitress is incompetent at carrying things.

Subjected to the three-dimensional oppression of race, class and gender, Glory Bee is inferior and auxiliary. As a result of the dominant and patriarchal system, and because of accepting her own involvement in an unjust system, she accepts her role. She is a member of the serving class, a woman and a person of color. All these facts confirm her subservient role which a marginalized person must act in the power-play of authoritarian white men like the Colonel. The black actress Erica Gimpel acted the role of Glory Bee in the production of play in The American Place Theatre. Because Shepard himself regularly attended the rehearsals in New York, one may conclude that he proposed the role to be played by a black actress. But he never mentions to this in the text. The racial and sexual discrimination is obvious since she is displayed as an inferior, auxiliary, passive, emotional, and tender person not even doing the simplest work duties properly. She is there to serve superior, dominant, active, rational, and strong white men and clean up their mess and be used sexually by them. The only time she feels free and well is when she can sing and dance.

Glory Bee, the second woman in the play, acts the role of a stereotyped sexy and silenced woman. Glory Bee is too dumb to say anything about the conflict taking place between the Colonel and Stubbs. She hardly says anything except for the common phrases of a waitress. Glory Bee as female character has to catch the interest of the male characters and arise them to erotic sensation through her way of wearing and flirtatious behavior. To perform her sexual function, she passively waits for the orders of the Colonel and Stubbs to serve them with her sexuality. Glory Bee’s range of function is reduced to what is typical of female activities: readiness to do domestic tasks such as taking orders, serving drinks and food to male customers or cleaning up the mess they make and to be used sexually whenever two male protagonists are in need. She is not even able to do her simple duties adequately. As a waitress she serves her
customers in slow motion and sometimes does not serve them at all as in the case of the White couple. She either ignores them completely or gives them disrespectful replies. The White Woman reveals her female masculinity thinking that Glory Bee ought to be shot for her poor service. She says “She understands nothing” (25) and the White Man being subservient to the White Woman follows his wife and confirms saying that Glory Bee does not realize anything. The Colonel repeatedly tries to show Glory Bee how to take a tray in a balanced way but she is unable to do it properly. Colonel becomes angry and yells at her, “Can’t you remember the simplest thing!” (32). He goes further threatening her to hit if she does not act as he expects her: “I am a God among men! . . . You don’t want a beating, do you?” (33). Colonel behaves like a macho male showing his masculinity, violence and aggression verbally. Glory Bee is too willing to serve the Colonel and Stubbs since she recognizes a true man.

The concept of American masculinity is important when examining the issue of soldiering in Shepard’s *States of Shock*. There is a link between joining the army and manhood. But there is no strict definition of manhood. Undeniably, the concept of gender has changed over the course of time. “The concept of masculinity as natural is problematized by moving across cultures and looking at examples different from our own. There is such wide cultural variation in masculinity that considering various cases leads to the inevitable conclusion that it is something that is very difficult to ascertain” (Reeser 2). Historical events and specific social-cultural developments shape the idea of what it means to be a man in the twentieth century. Shepard’s *States of Shock* is mostly structured around male protagonists. What these characters do is to keep track of cultural and mythological images of manhood and construct their own identities in terms of those images. Not only does this play portray macho male and his power but it also reveals the anxieties and fracturing of male characters and the immaturity of their thinking about their own identities. Shepard criticizes the father figure as not being a real father in this play. By showing male characters as important representatives of a decaying masculine authority, Shepard ridicules the image of the patriarch and masculine role model. The father is blamed for having taught his son the wrong ideals.

*States of Shock* as an anti-war play is analogous to David Rabe’s *The Vietnam Trilogy*. Rabe’s The Vietnam plays are about men in war and the outcome that the survivors and their society
confront. These plays depict characters who in their search for manhood turn to the army (Altwein 3). With regard to their conception of masculinity, soldiering is important for them. The first two were written and performed while America was still involved in Vietnam. Rabe’s focus on the military is to show the popular idea of it as an institution which makes man rather than being an institution for war. Even though war is the background of Vietnam plays, Rabe places his soldiers against a social context detached from war such as the home in Sticks and Bones, and personal backgrounds and pressures including home life in both The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel and Streamers. Combining life in the camp with life at home, Rabe implies that violence in home life is only the result of the life in barracks. Such an attitude encourages a closer examination of the violent images within these plays. Cultural images of manhood associated with violence and aggression are presented not only in the Vietnam trilogy but in all of Rabe’s plays. His characters seem chiefly to be searching for identity and selfhood according to whatever they have learnt about manhood and manliness in their culture’s myths. Regarding the male characters in Rabe’s plays McDonough states:

Characters constantly face loss as they fail to live up to the ideals that the American media presents to its men (for example, the John Wayne of countless westerns and war movies), yet they remain unable to imagine new definitions or positions for themselves that do not recapitulate these ideals. Whether in battle or at home, his male characters are men under fire, pinned down by cultural expectations that confuses rather than clarify who or what they should be. This confusion heightens the level of violence within these male characters, indicating their seeming inability to confront and to move beyond their limited versions of a gendered self. (104)

Sticks and Bones is very similar to States of Shock in depicting a homecoming veteran who is rejected by family members. Ozzie and Harriet are typical Americans with two typical American sons, David and Rick. But when David returns from the Vietnam War blind and emotionally numb, he proves an embarrassment to his family, especially when he keeps talking to a Vietnamese girl. He insists that the Vietnamese girl follows him around but no one else can see the girl. Not knowing what else to do with David, Ozzie and Harriet convince him to commit suicide. Rick lends him a razor and even helps his brother cut his wrists. Then Rick rushes to
take one last photograph of David for the family album. Rejection of a homecoming veteran occurs in *States of Shock* too. Stubbs has returned from his service in the unnamed war physically and psychologically wounded. But he is rejected by his father who had encouraged him to turn to the army to achieve manhood. Soldiering is important as supposed means of gaining masculinity. Conflict between two generations is depicted through rejected son and father as a *role-model in crisis* which leads to anxiety. Through picturing a war hero rejected by his father the play *demythologizes* the belief that fighting in a war is a manly and heroic deed.

*States of Shock* is a confrontation between a father-figure and a disinherited son. The father, known as the Colonel is costumed in bits and pieces of historical uniforms, military decorations, and combat gear from various American wars. He is the archetypal military man and believes in the noble myths of war. The Colonel is eager to see that America is always involved in war. He regularly raises his glass in a toast to the enemy who has made the present unnamed war possible. He recurrently asserts “Without the enemy we’re nothing” (15). The Colonel’s companion, Stubbs, is the disabled veteran of that unnamed war. Their confrontation suggests a battle between father and son, between the patriarchal, myths of a righteous American military before Vietnam and the after Vietnam shattered realities of young men killed and traumatized in a costly war. The gas masks and sirens which appear late in the play also make it clear that these two men represent George Bush’s America involved in the war of Persian Gulf, and the unquestioning soldiers who participated in that war of destruction. Fathers and the government they support and represent will always be struggling to perpetuate their own patriarchal myths; sons will always be called to follow their fathers’ unwholesome aims innocently and reluctantly.

In *States of Shock*, the Colonel publicly claims that Stubbs is a war hero, a brave soldier who attempted to save the life of the Colonel’s son by putting his own body between his son and an enemy missile. Colonel tells that the missile has gone straight through Stubbs and killed his unfortunate son. Stubbs has been the lucky one who has lived to tell the tale. The Colonel is particularly obsessed with having Stubbs recount for him the precise circumstances leading to the death of his son. He uses toy soldiers, plastic tanks and planes, as well as silverware and condiments from the restaurant booth to recreate the exact sequence of events. He is obsessed to
both objectify and validate his son’s death, to set forth the facts in precise military terms which will exculpate his son of any misconduct by showing Stubbs’s battlefield gallantry.

The play’s attitude to war and its masculinist codes is deeply serious and condemning. . . . The play is forthright in its indictment of militaristic enterprise and nationalistic allegiance. The Colonel serves as the perverse embodiment of this viewpoint. He expounds on “American virtue” and extols a panoply of national heroes, from the Pioneer to the Lone Ranger. In the name of the nation he justifies the bloodshed of history and argues the necessity of aggression. (Roudane 263)

To defend or rather to find his own identity Stubbs has to kill Colonel’s fantasy of his son as heroic dead son by telling him his recollections of what happened on the battlefield. The following passage, where “Stubbs speaks about himself as if he were divided into two different persons, shows the profound split in his identity” (Willadt 276): “Your son. Your son. I remember him running. Crazy. Running toward the beach. Throwing his rifle in the green sea. Throwing his arms to the sky. Running to the mountains. Back to the beach. Screaming. I remember his eyes. . . . I remember him failing. Picking him up. Dragging him down the beach. Screaming his head off. Carrying him on my back” (37). Stubb’s disclosure threatens fantasy world of Colonel and weakens his concept of manhood.

Stubbs recollects events different from what Colonel forces him to recreate. He is not interested in the events leading up to his affliction which has changed his life. He wants to talk about his emotions, suffering, and dreadful pain. Stubbs who is confined to wheelchair suggests that he is Colonel’s son, and that he was running from battle, screaming his father’s name, when he was struck down by friendly fire. Stubbs feels he had a mission but all that disappeared in battle. Stubbs has been betrayed by the patriarchal myths which led him to war, fired upon and abandoned by his countrymen. His identity is denied by his father who no longer recognizes his kinship. Stubbs screams “The best way is to kill all the sons!” suggesting that from the very beginning of history fathers have been guilty of sacrificing their sons (44).
Stubbs has experienced war which has led to his eighty per cent mutilation. He has also become spiritually, emotionally and physically impotent. During the play, he screams repeatedly “MY THING HANGS LIKE DEAD MEAT” (34). It seems that he is trying to overcome his father’s and the American public’s desire to silence him. Stubbs’s physical and emotional mutilation is manifested in a wound which he repeatedly shows to the audience or to the other characters on stage. He says: “The middle of me is all dead. The core. I’m eighty percent mutilated. The part of me that goes on living has no memory of the parts that are all dead. They’ve been separated for all time” (14). Stubbs “acts and talks as if he is still in a ‘state of shock’ because of some horrible experience in the past” (Willadt 274). This startling image is usually accompanied by a shrill blast on the whistle Stubbs wears around his neck which speaks simply and eloquently of the physical devastation and emotional disaster experienced by those who go to war and die or those who return “mutilated" to the families which sent them off to fight. Stubbs is the image of dishonorable war and its brutal outcome which is known to Shepard’s generation—the Vietnam generation—but carefully avoided by the media treatment of the Persian Gulf War. Stubbs frequently wheels himself to the front edge of the stage, pulls up his shirt, blasts on his whistle, and shows his wound to display that prejudiced media treatment and to remind Americans of the reality behind the masculine myths of war. Stubbs’s wound manifests the trauma and betrayal he has experienced in the war which has torn through him like a missile, stripping him of his name and the very core of his being.

The personal and cultural mythology of America which Stubbs had in mind when he was in war is a matter which surfaces several times in the play. Early in the play, Stubbs tells how in the battle he wanted to have a “feeling for home” (19): “I couldn’t remember the faces--the voices--of the ones. I wanted to see them but their faces never came to me. Never came back” (20). Then he recounts that “America had disappeared” (20). There is a flash back to the moment before the bullet pierced his body. Stubbs attempts to fix a picture of home in his mind: he tries to imagine cotton candy, station wagons, Little Richard and the Mississippi River. He yells aloud “Don’t slip into doubt,” but he has slipped into doubt. The mythological images of America, homeland, and himself he had in his mind have been vanished.
States of Shock is obviously an influential and important response to the Persian Gulf War. The images are both simple and at the same time startling in their ability to transmit profound meaning. The scenic elements, for instance, the setting in place is supposedly a family restaurant consisting of a few properties placed on a bare stage in front of a large white cyclorama. The cyclorama illuminates from behind bursts of light, color, and images of war when emotions are intensified or extensive images of war are described. Beyond the cyclorama, two percussionists draw attention to such moments with strong rhythmic drumming and sound of a battle in progress. In stage direction we read: “Immediately the percussionists and war sounds join in full swing. The cyclorama explodes with bombs, missiles, and blown-up planes” (20).

States of Shock’s striking imagery and theatrical energy projected Shepar’s inner emotions onto the stages of off-off-Broadway. It portrays the postmodern era, post-Vietnam America. Shepard writes about the Vietnam War in order to articulate the traumatic state of personal and national crisis which is the legacy of the Vietnam era and which we now call postmodern America. “Spurred by his distaste with the public celebration of the 1991 Gulf War and its antiseptic satellite TV presentation, Shepard wrote States of Shock (1991), a stridently anti-war play that censures the valuation of aggression and conquest” (Krasner 298). Stubbs is the living testimony of the effects of war and violence. When the mutilated and mentally disturbed war veteran Stubbs wheels himself to the edge of the stage and pulls his sweatshirt up around his neck to expose his wound and despairing and empty self to the audience, it is concluded that he is condemning the war, violence, the modern technology, the belief that fighting in a war is a manly and heroic deed and most important a great American tradition: to die for country. Mythological picture of a war hero as an image of manliness and manhood is torn.

Shepard’s one-act play States of Shock (1991) was followed with the full-length piece Simpatico (1994), a play concerning treachery in the horse-breeding business. Simpatico is said to be Shepard’s first major play since A Lie of the Mind. In Simpatico, “Shepard again dealt with competing, dysfunctional males and the power of the Western ethos. He, however, introduced a new element into his writing seen in the character Simms, who retreats from revenge and models an attitude of acceptance and reconciliation” (Wade 298).
Old rivalries lead to new betrayals in this play. Vinnie and Carter have known each other for years, but their relationship has become less than friendly. Fifteen years before the action begins, as youths in Azusa, Vinnie, Carter, and Rosie pull off a racing scam that left Carter with all the advantages: cash, a car, and Vinnie’s wife, Rosie. Carter changes a couple of thoroughbreds in order to make a quick big money and, when the racing official, Simms, uncovers the swindle they arrange to have him discredited. They have photos taken of the official in a motel encounter with a young woman and using these photos as documents against him they set him up for blackmail that ends Simms’ career and ruins his life. They silence Simms and then Simms goes to another town under an assumed name.

Years later, Vinnie is an alcoholic low-life who still makes a living from blackmail; Carter is now married to Rosie and is a successful respectable horse breeder in Kentucky. Vinnie has incriminating information about him that he uses to get Carter to pay his living expenses. Vinnie Webb is the person who took the photographs and now wants to expose the truth since his ex-wife, Rosie, was the woman in the motel room whom Carter has stolen from him. In addition Vinnie wants to come out of his long exile and pay Carter back for stealing his wife and his Buick. Vinnie, disheveled and disgraceful loner, is a drunk in Pomona. Carter gets a call from Vinnie one night that he is in jail on a moral charge regarding a woman named Cecilia. Vinnie offers Carter if he comes to California to help him out of this mess, he will surrender the documents that he has been using against him for years. Carter is tempted and agrees, but when he arrives, it turns out that Vinnie’s not in jail. Cecilia has not filed any charges against him and this is just part of a larger scam. Carter is the target of this scam. When Carter arrives, Vinnie steals his wallet and heads for Kentucky with the original blackmail material.

He carries a shoebox full of the incriminating photographs excited to find the mysterious Simms. Simms denies his identity but he confesses that he some time ago heard of a man who had been vilified, pushed out of town and lost his entire family. “As a matter of fact, I did hear of him. Quite a while back. Out West somewhere. I suppose it could’ve been California. I think maybe you’re right about that. Vilified in the press, as I remember. Slandered. Railroaded outa town . . . Yes. Wife and kids packed it up on him. I believe that’s right. Bankrupt. Lost everything in fact. Bottomed out completely” (64-65). Then Simms’ statement imply that he has accepted his loss:
“loss can be a powerful elixir” (65). When Simms rejects the photos, Vinnie goes to Lexington to give them to Rosie, his ex-wife. She does not recognize Vinnie at first confrontation and then refuses the photos.

In the meantime, Carter is spending time with Vinnie’s girlfriend, Cecilia, a grocery clerk. He tells Cecilia fascinating stories of the Kentucky Derby and eventually persuades her to visit Simms. Carter begs Cecilia to follow Vinnie and get the material back. He believes Simms has bought the negatives and now wants to buy them back. But Simms’ ironic manner and his insinuating stories of great thoroughbreds such as Secretariat influences Cecilia and makes her short of breath. Simms tells her he was betrayed by two snakes: “They’re snakes, Cecilia. That’s exactly what they are. They crawl on their bellies” (115).

Complications of the intricate plot culminate when Vinnie rejoins Carter and he finds him trembling on the floor. Having unintentionally yielded power to Vinnie, Carter is shivering and cannot even put on his own pants and believes he is going to die. “Carter now wants to swap lives, just as he once swapped horses. He offers Vinnie his fortune, his estate and Rosie in return for Vinnie’s purity of conscience” (Brustein, Plays 282). Vinnie ignores him and leaves. This is a theatrical strategy explored by Shepard earlier, most remarkably in True West, where two brothers compete for position and exchange roles at the end of the play.

“Cecilia returns to pour Carter’s money over him on the bed, just as Tilden in Buried Child once poured vegetables over his father’s sleeping body” (Brustein, Plays 283). The play ends with stage direction “She exits. Phone keeps ringing. CARTER keeps staring at it without moving to answer. He shakes in his blanket as lights dim slowly. Phone rings into the blackness then stops” (135). The play is “an impressionist portrait of treachery, betrayal and failed redemption” (Brustein, Plays 283).

Concerning the title of the play, the word ‘simpatico’ is never used in the text, even though the characters are all connected and bound together. When Carter has totally unraveled and lost everything, he says to Vinnie that maybe they could start over again and reminds Vinnie that
once they had a real partnership, had a feeling between them and they were like a team. And these remarks remind us of the word simpatico.

In the play *Simpatico*, Simms confronting crisis in his life chooses to relieve himself from macho posture and become more balanced individual triumphing over the restrictions of life. He is a corrupt lecherous horse racing official and the target of blackmail. Throughout the course of the play, Simms’ character changes into a new figure. He adopts a new name, outlook on life, and main concerns. His story begins to disclose through his exchanges with Vinnie. He does not rely on revenge but he focuses on conserving his new identity. He gives advice to other characters, namely Vinnie, who can take benefit from it. Simms condemns the masculine need for revenge and sees it as a development of the violence that resulted in the loss of his previous life. He accepts blame for his affair with Rosie and understands that revenge will not change the result. His new life has given him a new start. Simms’ role implies “transcendence of traditional male gender expectations that Shepard utilizes. Evidence of this includes his refusal of an opportunity for revenge and his adherence to a newly acquired identity. Rather than being consumed by his past, Simms accepts personal responsibility and refuses to involve himself in further violence” (Wilson, *Forging* 24). Simms forms a new identity. Vinnie offers him incriminating evidence from recklessness of Simms’ past, but he refuses and confesses that even though he was subjected to blackmail, he was not interested.

In Act I, it is said that Simms has adopted a new self. Carter and Vinnie have blackmailed Simms. Then Carter has helped him form a new career. Carter says Vinnie that now Simms is using a false name “He’s changed his name you know. . . . Calls himself ‘Ames’ or something. Ryan Ames, I think it is” (31-32). Vinnie asks Simms to clear his name and ruin Carter, but Simms is not interested in Vinnie’s offer even though his declarations imply that his failure in professional and personal life wasn’t easy. He states, “He must’ve paid the piper then. This ‘party’. . . . probably paid ten times over. Didn’t he? Must’ve suffered very dearly for his little transgression. Maybe suffered far more than any of his revilers could’ve imagined. That’s the way it usually goes” (58) and he was “vilified in the press, as I remember. Slandered. Railroaded outa town . . . wife and kids packed it up on him. I believe that’s right. Bankrupt. Lost everything. Bottomed out completely. . . . Why should you be sorry? Loss can be a powerful
elixir” (65). His declarations imply that Simms has admitted his loss and tried to build a new life. His statements suggest that revenge is not worth losing self-identity. He also accuses Vinnie of doing vengeance and suggests that maybe he ought to correct himself. At the end of Act II Scene ii, Vinnie attempts to entice Simms about the documents he has in his hold:

VINNIE. But if I was him—if I was this man and I had this kind of an opportunity—to come out of hiding—to live out in the open again and regain my—my self-esteem—my good standing in the public eye--To move freely. It just seems to me--

SIMMS. You’re not.
VINNIE. What?
SIMMS. You’re not this man. (66)

Simms does not blame Carter for his past. He accepts that his documented act with Rosie is something he is responsible for and he is to blame for even though others benefit from it. Simms is satisfied with his current condition. “I’m so completely absorbed in my work that the outside world has disappeared. It’s vanished, Mr. Webb. I’m no longer seduced by its moaning and fanfare. I’m busy with the ‘Sports of Kings’ “ (64).

In Simpatico, Shepard does not elevate male characters to a higher position; on the contrary, he chooses to display them in crisis. This is explicitly stated in the words exchanged between Carter and Vinnie in Act One. Carter asks Vinnie, “Look—You wanted to talk to me, right? You called me. You’ve got some kind of a major crisis going on. Something that couldn’t wait” (6). Vinnie tells Carter, “Crisis is my middle name” (6). And then when Carter tells Vinnie that, “Look, Vinnie, I gave you all kinds of options” (15), Vinnie expresses his dissatisfaction. “The option to disappear, for instance. The option to perpetually change my name and address. The option to live like a ghost . . . I am dead. I am locked away.” (15-16). Almost near the end of Act I, Vinnie declares that he has changed his name a dozen of times and nothing has come out of it. He has moved all over the place. He was in Texas for a while, Arizona. But nothing has come of it. He just has got further and further removed (33). Later in Act II scene iii Carter tells Cecilia about the crisis he is in, “I’m in the midest of a crisis, in case you didn’t notice. Suddenly I’m in the midest of a crisis! . . . Vinnie is a weasel! He’s a low-down, treacherous, diabolical little man.
The scum of the earth. He’s systematically trying to crucify me!” (75), “Things are falling apart! THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!” (76). Carter believes that Vinnie wants him to suffer (81). In Act III Scene iii, Carter tells Vinnie that he is going to change his name and to disappear (131). Shepard concentrates on the troubles of male characters to portray their inability to act successfully. This is chiefly evident in the procedure male characters achieve their identity. “They must go on a quest or fall from grace and then pick up the pieces in order to gain a complete awareness. Shepard, if read closely, is a supporter of a male identity which is balanced, meaning that it is a mixture of traditionally male and female components, not a violent one” (Wilson, Forging 33). Shepard represents male characters that stick to the traditional male roles as incomplete and ineffective. Male characters have decent relationships with both genders and abandon violence.

“Not all of the male characters from Simpatico are independent or self-assured. Vinnie and Carter are like two parts of a whole identity. Shepard creates them as a pair; which will eventually switch roles. Carter is able to survive in the mainstream society, while Vinnie is struggling alone, not passable as a ‘regular citizen’” (Wilson, Forging 25-26). Vinnie and Carter change roles or switch identities very easily. Vinnie resides in Cucamonga, California, close to a desert. This shows his social and career failure and that he has been removed from society. It is said that he lives on “the edge of nowhere” (19). Carter is forced to support Vinnie financially since he has some photographs and knowledge relating to the blackmail. Vinnie pretends to be a private investigator. Carter believes Vinnie “lies about everything! It’s all part of this illness of his. This sickness! He’s a professional liar” (49), “He has no mind! He’s brainless! (77). On the other hand, Carter himself owns a successful company in Kentucky. He is married to Rosie and has children. It is stated that he has prosperous career. Vinnie and Carter have been from the same class and social background. Now Carter is disconnected from his true self and Vinnie accuses him:

VINNIE. That must be something new and different for you, huh? Being a member. Must’ve been difficult at first. Fitting in. Pretending you had something in common. Kissing ass with the gentry. . . .
Like your seedy past is long forgot. Might never have really even taken place. Might have actually belonged to another man. A man so remote and dead that you’ve lost all connection. A man completely sacrificed in honor of your bogus membership in the High Life. (20-21)

At the end of the play there is a role reversal between Carter and Vinnie. Taking Simms’ advice, Vinnie forgets the past and begins a new life free from the incriminating proof. Carter attempts to make a deal with him, “I’ll make you a deal. . . . I’ll take your place and you can have mine. . . . You can have it all. Even Rosie” (132). Vinnie rejects them all saying that “I don’t want anything you’ve got. You can stop sending me your bullshit. All your TVs and Jap cars and corny golf shirts. All your guilt money. You can keep all that. Now if you don’t get up off my floor, I’m gonna drag your ass out into the road and leave you there” (132).

“Carter, however, reverts to an unsure, drunken stereotypical Shepard male. He appears physically ill; his ‘teeth chatter,’ he’s ‘rolling side to side,’ he has been drinking Bourbon, and abandoned his cell phone (a symbol of his affluence) (120). Although Vinnie refers to this illness as a ‘breakdown,’ Carter is convinced he’s ‘dying’” (Wilson, Forging 27). Vinnie Abandons Carter. He affirms, “You can die with your tongue hanging out. I don’t give a shit” (133). Carter experiences anxiety attack and is the only character in the play “with no home base on-stage. He never knows where to put his coat, where to sit down, or even if he can stay. When he does stop, he feels, as Harris put it, ‘caged’. We even see the set diminish as walls disappear from scene to scene. As Ed Harris noted in rehearsal, ‘The room is disappearing as Carter is evaporating.’” (Rosen, Sam Shepard 190). According to Don Shewey, Shepard is

less interested in love-hating the notion of media stardom and more curious about identity shift as psychic suicide. In fact, you could say he’s obsessed with this theme. His latest new play, Simpatico (written in 1993), seems rather dull and cryptic on the most literal level. It re-enacts the kind of identity exchange between a successful guy and his lowlife alter-ego that occurs in True West, only this time in the milieu of horse racing rather than moviemaking. But there is something mysterious going on underneath the surface. . . . At the end of the play, the slippery character Vinnie seems to thrive specifically because he
doesn’t cling to a set identity, and despite his Rolex and cell phone, Carter seems to be dying. (292)

The play ends with an image of Carter shaking “in his blanket as lights dim slowly with a sense of guilt, betrayal, and isolation. Phone rings into the blackness then stops” (135). Vinnie has taken the position of dominance and control Carter once had and Carter lives in solitude and darkness.

Fatherhood is also an important aspect of Shepard’s male identity. Although Simms does not play an explicit fatherly role, he was a father in his old life. He advises Vinnie to improve his life and adopt a new identity. He tries to instruct other characters the evils of selling out for vengeance or status. He stresses the importance of doing what one loves. When Vinnie offers photos to him he tells “How many lives do you think a man can live, Mr. Webb? How many lives within this one? . . . Well, say for instance, you could put the past to death and start over. Right now. You look like you might be a candidate for that. . . . No? Vengeance appeals to you more . . . Yes, Blood. Now why is that? Why is blood more appealing than rebirth (61)”?

Carter is also a father, although his children are never shown to the audience. “This may be Shepard’s way of commenting on his inability to be true to his ‘roots,’ an incapability to be honest about his past of modest means prevents him from evolving into a complete self. Carter is Shepard’s more subdued critique of masculinity and male identity” (Wilson, Forging 32).

In Simpatico, female characters are portrayed as self-contained but still controlled by the masculine ideal to some extent. While there are specific points in the play where Cecilia and Rosie are used to the benefit of male characters, they are not dominated by men throughout the entire play. Although the appearance of both female characters is described to show that their beauty is exploited to the male’s benefit they are still staged as independent and powerful.

Rosie had a sexual intercourse with Simms which was photographed. She took advantage of the blackmail becoming Carter’s wife but the act must have led to her suffering and anxiety. She takes pills and feels security in the fact that Carter can never leave her. When Vinnie attempts to
grab and kiss her, she declares that Carter is indebted to her for what she has done and that she has the power to have Vinnie killed.

ROSIE. “You touch me--You so much as touch me again and I’ll have you killed. This is my house. I’m the wife of someone. Someone of tremendous power and influence. He could have you done in from a distance and you wouldn’t even know what hit you. . . . He owes to me. He’s deeply in debt to me, all from that one little brainstorm of mine, way back then. That one little night on the edge of Azusa”.

VINNIE. Oh, so now you’re suddenly gonna take all the credit.

ROSIE. Yeah sure. Why not? It was a brilliant little notion. It paid off in spades too, didn’t it? I probably shoulda just gone professional.

VINNIE: I took the pictures!

ROSIE: You certainly did. But I turned the trick. It was me who caused the heads to roll and don’t you ever forget it”. (102-03)

Even though she compares herself to a prostitute, Rosie is at comfort for she is the wife of a powerful and authoritative man. Her power supersedes Carter’s since if she exposes their secret at will Carter will lose his authoritative position. Her power is explicit in her words. Especially there is an emphasis by the author on words my, I, and owe since he writes them in italicized form.

Concerning the other female character Cecilia, even though Carter also uses her for his own benefit she stays very powerful and behaves with great dignity. He makes Cecilia into believing that Vinnie is at the risk of imprisonment. He gives her a chance to go to the Kentucky Derby and in exchange she has to bribe information out of Simms. She has to tolerate Simms sexual innuendo and is blamed to be a prostitute: “You’re not a high-paid chippie then? A Class Act? Something found in the Yellow Pages under ‘Executive Escorts’?” (112). After several attempts to buy the negatives from Simms, she finally admits that she is not the right type of person for this work and that her true motivation was to attend the Derby, “I shouldn’t have come here at all. I didn’t want to be doing this. I’ve never done anything like this before in my life! . . . All I really wanted to do was go to the Kentucky Derby. And Mr. Carter offered me free tickets. . . . It
was foolish to get suckered in by something like that but—I love the Derby” (114-15). There are evidences which suggest Cecilia rises above her female roles. After she goes back to Cucamonga, she returns the cash to Carter, “Your money’s all here. You can count it if you want. I only used a little bit for sandwiches and tea. I’ll pay you back, I promise” (135). Unlike Rosie, Cecilia does not exploit Carter for manipulating her. Cecilia also does not surrender to Simms’ advances as Rosie did. “Cecilia does not allow herself to be manipulated by males. Unlike Rosie, whose identity is dependent on the male figure, Cecilia tries to rise above that and strikes out on her own” (Wilson, Forging 28).

Although women characters are independent and self-reliant, they are still somehow tied to the labels of femininity and to males’ desires and definition of femaleness. In Act III, Scene iii, we see how Carter offers Rosie to Vinnie as his property, “You can have it all. Even Rosie” (132). Women are independent and yet do whatever is dictated to them by men. Rosie’s meeting with Simms is an example of this double status. Women are treated to be secondary and objectified but they have their own voice and power. Women are there to promote male identity. It is Rosie who causes Simms’ downfall and then the formation of his new personality. While apparently the images seem to show the superiority of the male characters, in fact the role of female characters is considerable and it is mainly the women who cause the initiation and intensification of male transformations.

Women have the ability to survive and become accustomed more easily in modern society than men. Proof of this is Cecilia, a cashier at a local grocery store. She is able to function in the society well. Rosie does not have a profession of her own but has a position of power which gives her economic safekeeping. She has already fled Vinnie, who could not provide for her and married Carter. She does not look to be satisfied in her marriage but she has arranged her life so that Carter is compelled to support her. Both women have their residences and can manage their expenses. This is different from men’s situation that experience downfall in their professions and cannot hold stable jobs. “Some of the women’s success may be attributed to their adoption of some masculine characters” (Wilson, Forging 30).
Masculine violence and machismo are condemned in this play. The male character, Simms, commits act of violence against Rosie. Although there is no direct physical abuse in the play but flashbacks refer to his violence having sexual encounter with Rosie one night. Contrary to this is the relationship between Cecilia and Simms. It starts as sexual conversation but ends with only honest relationship between them. “Simms moves from an abusive male to one of the only men who is able to see a woman as an equal” (Wilson, Forging 31).

Masculinity is depicted as in crisis. Male characters confront some obstacles that they must overcome for the formation of their identity. Simms is a male character who is created with a full identity. He does not use violence in some way and he does not consider women as inferior creatures. In his new life he does not act according to the expectations of masculinity. His sexual banter with Cecilia is only a means for him to find out her motives. While in the beginning he accuses Cecilia of being prostitute sent by Carter, it is a simple question with regard to the blackmail of the past. The final conversation between these two indicates that Simms is not looking for a sexual relationship but a companionship. This proves his realization of an equal status for both sexes. Simpatico represents positive images of women portraying female characters’ strength and independence. Women are needed to promote males’ change in personality.

The Late Henry Moss, directed by Shepard himself, was first staged at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco in November 2000. The play reveals the awkward condition of the American family. “As seen in so many Shepard plays, questions of heredity, legacy, and legitimacy animate the stage, as do the status of the real and the ways in which the individual subjectivizes his or her own version of reality” (Roudane 279). It portrays the combination of mythic realism with metaphysical thrills. The play offers a subversive attack on American myth and values. Considerably, the central issues of the play are: an unresolved past, the violent history between the father, mother, and son, and the irresistible terror.

Two antagonistic brothers, Ray and Earl, are brought together after their father, Henry Moss, is found dead in his seedy New Mexico home. Henry was a harassing, arrogant drunk, and his sons
have inherited his worst qualities. Ray is determined to uncover the mysterious circumstances of Henry’s death. In three acts, the story of the father’s last days unfolds in flashbacks.

The stage is packed with opposing descriptions of reality, contradictory accounts of what exactly happened to Henry Moss and others in the days preceding Henry’s death. “The drama raises debates about individual, familial, and cultural identity and memory, as it does about the relationship between abstract and concrete experience, fiction and reality, and, ultimately, about coming to terms with death itself” (Roudane 279). There are a lot of complexities and ambiguities which are created by the presence of a ghost as the play’s major character. Henry Moss is a dead man who has come back revisiting the past. The play is about a distressed family and anti-hero character. Concerning The Late Henry Moss Shepard states:

Right now it’s titled The Late Henry Moss, which is actually a take-off of an Irish short story called “The Late Henry Conran” by Frank O’Connor. I’ve been working on it for the last ten years, off and on. I actually abandoned it at one point and then picked it back up again, a lot due to Joe, who read it again and thought that it would be worthwhile, and Joe actually did a workshop production of it. The play concerns another predicament between brothers and fathers and it’s mainly the same material I’ve been working over for thirty years or something but for me it never gets old, although it may for some audiences. This one in particular deals with the father, who is dead in the play and comes back, who’s revisiting the past. He’s a ghost—which has always fascinated me. Do you know the work of [John Millington] Synge, the Irish playwright? He uses corpses a lot in his plays. And the corpse is present in the play and the corpse comes alive. I don’t know, I find that fascinating, and this features in The Late Henry Moss. (Roudane 79-80)

The Late Henry Moss represents a turning point within Shepard’s work. The play deals with death. Shepard had not directly dealt with death before.

The family tragedy starts with two brothers who sit in a run-down New Mexico adobe where their father’s corpse lies rotting. The brutishly irresponsible elder brother, Earl, apparently numbed by grief tells a bizarre story of the old man’s death: of how he perished after a drunken
fishing-trip with a native Indian woman called Conchalla. But Ray, the skeptical sibling, sees the story makes little sense. Having tracked down the Albuquerque taxi-driver who took his father on his binge, he uncovers a story of domestic violence and moral exhaustion from which everybody is harmed.

The sibling rivalry of troubled brothers, Earl and Ray, reminds the reader of *True West*. And the vicious secrets of family life reminds the reader of *Buried Child*. But what gives this play its special texture is its complex narrative technique. As neurotically investigative Ray digs out the truth, like a detective, we realize that families sustain themselves through self-deluding stories: if Earl has made up the circumstances of his father’s death, it is to conceal his involvement in the old man’s marital abuse.

For Shepard the family is a metaphor for America itself: a society that survives on lies, elusions and refusal to encounter unpleasant truths. When Henry Moss comes back to life through storytelling, he condemns his sons “who couldn’t find their peckers in a pickle jar” (65) and the humorously reluctant and frightened whining taxi-driver who has fantasies of becoming a pizza-delivery man and seducing girls with his pineapple combo.

The play’s narrative is very complicated compared to the previous plays written by the playwright. Demastes finishes *Realism and the American Dramatic Traditions* with the following lines: “American new realist playwrights are discovering that to turn away from the linear causality of the mechanists and to wade into the ‘river of circumstances’--the dynamic, nonlinear, and evolving chaos of ‘the powerful sweeps of pattern and energy that is our lives’--may provide them with a more accurate description of life (273).

The most remarkable features about *The Late Henry Moss* are alcoholism, the never-seen mother, the violence against women, the emotional injuries of children, sense of anger, patriarch not recognizing his own children, the shameful death of the father, the bewildered sons, chaotic condition of the American family, demythologized image of war hero, female masculinity and male effeminacy.
The Late Henry Moss is Sam Shepard’s last work of the twentieth century. From 1990 onwards, Shepard’s interest seems to shift to some extent from male-female relationships to that between men. In The Late Henry Moss (2000), the focus is mostly on the relationship between men especially between father and his sons and between brothers to portray the image of father in crisis and sibling rivalry.

In his well-known and revolutionary book Masculinities, R.W. Connell categorizes four “patterns of masculinity in the current Western gender order”: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. The first category, hegemony, 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” (Connell 77-81).

The Late Henry Moss revolves around the recent death of the play’s title character, Henry Moss and destruction of his hegemonic masculinity. His two separated sons are reunited after many years by the death of their alcoholic father. They have come to their father’s simple adobe located near the outskirts of Bernalillo, New Mexico. As the play begins, Earl leafs and looks at a family photograph album while Ray checks a wrench in an old red tool chest. Their father’s body lies in a small bedroom. While talking about burial arrangements, the brothers recollect past events reconstituted through flashback sequences. It comes to light what might have happened to Henry Moss during his last days and to the Moss family years ago. “Thus spatially and temporally, the play at times unwinds in a nonrealistic, and nonlinear, form” (Roudane 281). Brothers instantaneously contradict each other. They accuse each other of remembering things erroneously. There is a split between the signifier and the signified. The contradictory dialogues, shifting accounts of past action and present consequence, the arrangement of language and stage directions portray postmodernist culture.

Men learn to fear their own emotions and feelings because they might betray their identity as heterosexual men. They feel that they have to control ‘their’ women, even if they cannot control other areas of their lives and labour. They can expect to give orders and be obeyed by their partners. Sometimes they will use violence to make sure of the
obedience they believe they are entitled to. Often the structures of male power are clearly visible even if they are so taken for granted that they are hardly seen by the men themselves. (Seidler 45)

The buried truths of the past have been repressed through years of denial and trick which leads to disconnection in the family. No wonder the father claims that he does not even recognize his son Earl. “Love is absent in The Late Henry Moss. Isolation is the norm. Denial becomes both a source of comfort and anguish. A willed ignorance stabilizes this family” (Roudane 289-90).

Through flashbacks, past horrific events are discovered. Henry assaulted his wife kicking her into a bloody husk one fateful evening a quarter of a century ago. Evidently the family never recovered from that traumatic moment. Henry recalls, “She was on the floor . . . I remember the floor--was yellow--and--her blood--was smeared across it like. I thought I’d killed her--but it was me. It was me I killed. I can see her eyes-- peering up at me. Her swollen eyes. She just--stays there, under the sink. Silent. Balled up like an animal. Nothing moving but her eyes” (111-12). Then astonished by his own savagery, Henry flees. He says: “I ran. I ran to the car and I drove. I drove for days with the windows wide open” (112). “This is a man who ‘ran out’ of his marriage, relationship, home, fatherhood, and any meaningful connection with a larger community” (Roudane 288). Despite his expression of grief that reaches a particularly sharp feeling of sadness by the third act, Henry Moss never expresses regret for nearly murdering his wife. He says “that little shit. Another traitor. Locked me out of my house! That’s what she did. Locked me out!” (109) “She caused me to leave! She caused me to pack on outta there! What’d’ya think? You think I wanted to wander around this godforsaken country for twenty some years like a refugee? Like some miserable fuckin’ exile? You think I wanted that?” (110). Henry understands only seconds before falling into his final death that, at the specific moment he assaulted his wife, “he transformed himself from the present Henry Moss to the late Henry Moss. Within the imaginative logic of Shepard’s play, physical death twenty-five years later is a mere formality. The Mosses emerge as characters whose very identities are under assault” (Roudane 282).
There is no discernible identity for Henry’s wife who was brutally and savagely beaten to death by her husband frenzied with drink. She is always absent even from the flashback scene. She stays nameless. We learn nothing else about her except the fact that Henry abused her. Earl, the elder son, lacked the courage to protect his mother when she was savagely beaten by his father. That fateful evening he ran in terror. His actions repeat his father’s throughout the play. Earl sped off in his 1951 Chevy and did not appear for years. Few other details about his past are provided in the play. It seems that he ignores his own shortcoming or weakness and forgives or accepts his father’s brutality towards his mother.

There is no love or affectionate relation between family members. Characters display their independence, yet they return begging for shelter. Henry’s weakness and distress show that he is in crisis. He has not the capability of doing his responsibility as father. Having murdered his wife and abandoned by his sons, he feels loneliness. He needs companionship. Esteban just pretended to drink with him. Ray believes that Henry was “so starved for human companionship” (35).

“Fatherhood becomes simply another one of the male mythologies that fail to give Shepard’s men any stable identity, leading to confusion, violence, and destruction of self and others” (McDonough 41). As Ray recounts the event his mother was beaten by Henry. Earl had not stood up for his mother and he had just abandoned the house. Since then Henry has always been drunk to forget it. Ray says: “I remember the windows exploding” (8) and Earl insists Henry was the one breaking windows not him (8). Ray remembers it “like a war or something. An invasion . . . Explosions. Screaming. Smoke. The telephone . . . People running. You were one of them” (9). Sibling rivalry staged by Earl and Ray reaches to its climax. They acquire machismo posture in turn. Ray accuses his elder brother, Earl, for not defending their mother “I saw you run!! [Earl suddenly whirls around and attacks Ray. He overpowers him and sends him crashing across stage into refrigerator. Ray hits the floor. Earl crosses to him and kicks Ray in the stomach. Ray collapses . . . ]” (45). Suffering from paranoia, Ray adopts machismo posture to defend himself. He is very brutish toward people around him especially his brother, Earl. When Ray inquires Taxi about Henry, the driver becomes exhausted and decides not to take the hundred bucks offered to him by Ray and leaves but the moment he moves to door to exit “Ray suddenly flies at him from the chair and pins him up against the door. Ray grabs him by the chest. Taxi offers no
resistance; just whimpers” (69-70). Even when he inquires cab-driver he is very concerned not to allow him encroach his territory. Keeping Taxi in a specified point in the room and not permitting him to step forward in fact he does not let him intrude his manhood.

In Act Three, Ray and Esteban have some conflicts. Earl orders Ray “You get outta here now! Go someplace else! There’s lots of motels in this town. You just outta here!” (93). Then Earl feels something has happened to his legs. They have gone numb since he cannot feel them. He collapses on the table. But Ray kicks his feet out from under him. And Earl “crashes to the floor” (94). Ray tells Earl “Get up off the floor!!”. “[Ray kicks Earl hard in the ribs. Earl struggles to the downstage chair and drags himself up into it]” (95). Ray appears to be obsessive by a desire to support and defend her mother he could not protect being too young. Now he tries to make compensation for the failing of the past. He makes Earl to mop the kitchen floor just as their father mopped the bloody floor before. “Earl follows Ray’s orders” (96). Ray reminds the traumatic event that happened to his mother “Because I knew, see—I didn’t have a chance against him. I barely came up to his waist. All I could do is watch! And there she was—On the floor! Just like you, Earl. Just like you are now. Backed up under the sink! Crushed. He was kicking her, Earl! He was kicking her just like this! [Ray starts savagely kicking Earl all over the stage]” (99). He explains how every time Henry kicked her mother his rage grew a little bit and his face changed! Henry’s eyes bulged out and the blood rushed into his neck! And his mother’s blood was flying all over the kitchen (100). Disturbed by the beating of his mother and not being able to protect her, Ray runs from home after Earl, his elder brother, abandons the family. “Shepard’s plays moved audience into a surreal world in which the icons of American culture, including the nuclear family, became caricatures in an emerging culture and a resistant dramatic form” (Fearnaw 513). Members of Moss family are damaged and their only notable feature is their insignificance in the world. As Ray says to Taxi, “You’re nothing. Just like me. An empty nothing. A couple of nothings whose lives have never amounted to anything and never will” (53). “For Henry, ‘identity’ seems buried in a maze of denials and rationalizations” (Roudane 283). Male identity is staged as problematic. Henry remains alone drunk for years to avoid thinking about a past that emotionally paralyzes him. Only benevolent Mexican neighbor, Esteban, who long ago befriended and still gives food to Henry, and Conchalla Lupina, Henry’s
mysterious girlfriend he met while both were in the local jail know much about Henry’s recent existence.

Contrary to the female masculinity of Conchalla, the effeminacy of Esteban catches the attention. Esteban is also attributed all characteristics which is given to traditional females being under the control, affectionate, tender and emotional. He has always been giving service to Henry, taking care of him and cooking for him even though sometimes Henry did not eat the soup he cooked for him. “I brought Mr. Henry his soup. He sometimes will eat. Sometimes not. Depends on his mood. How you catch him. I was very worried this time. He just disappears like that” (29). Even after Henry’s death he continues cooking soup. Act Three opens with Esteban “cooking menudo in a black pot on the stove. He has his spices, herbs and wears an orange apron. He is very meticulous and attentive to his cooking” (82). Esteban feels bad for he has not been there when the corpse of Henry had been taken from the home. “[Kicking out at Esteban,]” Earl says: “Get away from me! Just get the hell away! It’s like being with a woman, being around you!” (82). Esteban thinks that maybe Henry was waiting to say good-bye and Earl asks him just stir his damn pot. Considerably, Esteban is subject to Ray’s violence. Ray becomes angry when Esteban addresses him as ‘sir’. When Esteban repeats that word again, Ray “leaps out of chair and grabs Esteban by the collar” (37). Then he grabs Esteban’s hand and pushes it down on the face of Henry’s corpse. “Touch his face, Esteban! This is Henry. ‘Mr. Henry’! The man you’ve been bringing soup to for all these years” (42). Esteban, shocked, stands there trembling. The sound of Esteban is heard who is “softly weeping” (43). Ray makes him stop weeping “stop that goddamn whimpering!” (43).

Shepard’s later works attempt to depict women with greater breadth and complexity. One of the most astonishing characters of The Late Henry Moss is the presence on stage of Conchalla Lupina who seems to be paradoxical in simultaneous maintenance of the features given to female sexuality and macho male. She is tender, appealing and seductive as well as tough, strong and merciless. Reeser in Masculinities in Theory writes “On a more individual level, female
masculinity could be a strategy to empower women to move into realms traditionally occupied by men” (135). And Effeminacy of men demonstrates the “destruction inherent in the male mythologies for men” (McDonough 40).

In Act I, Esteban describes well Conchalla’s paradoxical status to Ray and Earl: “That Indio woman. She is so—you know—[cups his hands under his chest]—Robusto! No? Very strong woman. Right, Mr. Earl? A lot of woman for Henry” (31). “He have fun with her I bet. [giggles and sways.] She bend his back like a willow tree. She fuck him silly! [Esteban bursts out laughing and jumping up and down]” (32). Ray asks Esteban about what is the deal with Conchalla and Esteban expresses her to be too sexy: “Oh, Mr. Ray—Conchalla is very mysterious woman. With a woman like this, believe me, a man could die in her arms and thank the saints! He could pray for no better way to leave this suffering world” (36). “When I think of her I—If you saw her you would know. She would burn a hole right through your heart! [stabs his chest with his fingers.] Right through the center of your soul! Right there! [Esteban pokes his finger hard into Ray’s chest, then quickly backs away]” (37).

Conchalla is too cruel to accept Henry’s existence. Henry appears as a ghost. He is living in state of limbo not alive not dead “The question of my being! My actuality in this world! Whether or not I’m dead or not!” (65). In Act Two in a flashback it is Henry who talks to cab driver: “She pronounced me dead! That’s what she did” (61). He continues: “That’s what she did to me. Can you imagine? Right in jail too. In front of everyone. We were both incarcerated together and she made that pronouncement. Publicly! Standing right over my semiconscious body. She just bellowed it out to the general jail community at large: ‘Senor Moss is dead!’ Now it’s all over town. All over this territory. Everyone thinks I’m dead!” (61). Taxi insists that Henry is not dead since he is walking and talking. But Henry believes that it does not make any difference. Conchalla is trying to obliterate him before his natural time of his death comes. She has taken out an obituary in the paper saying that “Henry Jamison Moss: Dead. Deceased. Causes unknown” (62).

Conchalla has control over a male figure that has been acting and showing patriarchal strength once beating his wife to death. Now his destiny is in the hand of a female character that controls
his life and death through her female masculinity. At this time Henry is dependent on a woman to confirm his aliveness, his actuality.

In another flashback we observe Henry and Conchalla back from fishing. Henry shows a fish to Conchalla but she does not accept it as a fish: “That is no fish! That is fish wishing to become a fish. A wish fish!” (71). Metaphorically this refers to Henry not being alive, not being a real man but desiring to be so. A Wish Man. Conchalla refers to male body as the sign of masculinity: “I remember he bragged the same way about his penis” (72). Fish symbolizes Henry’s penis. Conchalla says to Henry that there is no fish and Henry must have been dreaming! Then she wants Henry not to go near fish since she has it between her thighs. “I just squeeze him a little between my legs. Like this--” (73). Henry tells Taxi that he is surrounded by liars! That Conchalla says there’s no fish, but there is a fish. He is attempting to preserve his masculinity. Just as Henry applies to Taxi to explain Conchalla his lots of qualities beside breathing and yelling, Conchalla raises her arm up out of the water with the live fish twitching and hanging from her fingers. She raises fish straight over her head. “Then she lets the fish drop directly into her mouth. Her jaws close as she grinds the fish between her teeth. Her arm drops with a mighty splash. Her eyes close again. She smiles as she goes on chewing the fish. Taxi runs toward the door, in terror” (77-78). Henry tells Esteban that she has eaten his fish raw and that “she’s a barbarian!” (103). It is not his fish that has been swallowed by bestial and savage Conchalla but his manhood, his true maleness that has been grinded between the teeth of female masculinity. Conchalla proves that there is no actuality in Henry’s manhood and Henry’s identity. In Act Three at the end of the play, Conchalla “grabs Henry by the chest with tremendous force and lifts him up to the table. She lays him out on the table as Earl watches helplessly” (110-11). Then in a symbolic scene she lifts Henry’s head and pours the tequila into his mouth like a medicine. After little time Henry lies back and dies quietly. She puts an end to Henry’s life. Female masculinity is a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

War is not the subject of The Late Henry Moss. But it deserves consideration since the myth of American war hero is deconstructed in the play. Henry is a good example of home-coming man in crisis. He is everything except a hero. He has been living “out here in the middle of nowhere
with no—contact” (23). Esteban tells Henry thought “the world was trying to eat him” (33) and “he was doomed, he said” (33).

The picture Taxi gives from Henry in the flashback depicts him as effeminate not as war hero: “I could hear something from inside so I knew there was this moaning like—this weeping. I didn’t know what to make of it. Door was open so—I just let myself in. And there he was—lying on his side in bed there. Sobbing like—” (56).

Henry does not receive a formal military burial as a war hero. Having kept Henry’s corpse for some days at home Ray asks: “We can’t just bury him ourselves, huh? Just dig a hole and do it ourselves? That’s illegal, isn’t it? . . . I mean that’s what you’d do with a dog—” (16). “Just dig a hole and bury him” (17). It is illegal otherwise they might have down it. Earl says “every death has to be reported these days. Unless you kill somebody” (16).

He has been receiving much money from government for performing his duty in war. When Henry’s sons lie to Esteban that he’s slept, he says: “Oh, no. No, no, no. He need his sleep. That is good for Henry. I was so worried when I saw he have that money. So much money. That is why I call you, Mr. Earl” (32). Henry had told Taxi that it was blood money he was receiving: “Mr. Taxi! World War II blood money! Guess how many dead Japs that cost? Take a guess” (60). Then he himself answers that it is beyond Taxi’s imagination. Then Henry explains that he has led an honorable life for the most part. He has served his country and dropped bombs on total strangers! He adds “I’ve worked my ass off for idiots. Paid my taxes. There’s never once been any question of my—existence! Never once. It’s humiliating! A man my age—to be forced into this kind of position. I’m too old to be having to prove I’m alive!” (79). Henry has been receiving checks as government pension. Earl states “Who knows. GI check or something. Government pension. I guess he was always getting these checks and going on binges. He’s buying booze with it. He gets a haircut. He hitchhikes down to the shopping center. He wanders around downtown, drunk” (24). Esteban thinks that it is not good for weak man to have too much money “So much money in his hand. It is no good when a man is fighting his weakness. Too much money” (32). Henry has been fighting for the country and receiving financial support from
government but spiritually and emotionally he is a failure since war has not brought for him honor and true manliness as it is expected. The myth of soldiering as manhood is debunked.

In sum, Shepard’s three plays which has been written during and after 1990: *States of Shock*, *Simpatico*, and *The Late Henry Moss* involve a shift in the focus. In these plays main focus is on the male/male relationship and crisis of masculinity. In addition, in these plays special attention is given to male identity; American family; fatherhood; sibling rivalry; balanced male; male/female relationship; feminized masculinity; female masculinity; female transcendence over men; war; and finally de-mythologized image of war hero as the American manhood.