MARIUSZ MARSZALSKI

Metaphysical Perspective in the Drama of Sam Shepard, David Rabe and David Mamet

WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU WROCŁAWSKIEGO
Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 7

CHAPTER I: METAPHYSICS AN OVERVIEW .................................. 23
Metaphysics Reigns Supreme .............................................. 31
The Onset of Metaphysical Skepticism .................................... 35
The Waning of Speculative Metaphysics under the Impact of Positivist Empiricism 37
Anti-metaphysical Bias as a Result of the Rise of Sciences .................. 41
The Failure of Sciences to Endorse an Empirically Verifiable Ontology .... 43
Is Metaphysics Possible in Postmodern Times? .......................... 46

CHAPTER II: MODERNIST AMERICAN DRAMA
TOWARDS THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL-ONTOLOGICAL WATERSHED ............. 51
The Epistemological Dominant of Modernist Drama ......................... 51
Metaphysical Breaches in the Predominantly Epistemological Modernist Drama 57
The Epistemological-ontological Watershed a Shift of Paradigms ............ 70

CHAPTER III: ONTOLOGICAL REALITIES OF POSTMODERN AMERICAN
DRAMA SAM SHEPARD, DAVID RABE, DAVID MAMET ........................ 85
Ideological Underpinnings of the New Ontologizing Drama .................. 85
A Lingering Existentialist Influence ....................................... 88
From an Uncertain Epistemology to an Insecure Ontology ................... 93
Manifestations of Ontological Insecurity ................................... 103
Entropic Worlds .................................................................. 103
Fragmented Realities .......................................................... 108
Problematized Realities the Undermining of the Stable Realist Ontology ... 113
The Subversive Treatment of Time and Space Universals ................. 113
Subversions of Realistic Ontology through Ontological Frame Breaking ... 119
Intrusions of the Supernatural .............................................. 120
Intrusions of Magic ................................................................ 121
Intrusions of the Uncanny ..................................................... 123
Intrusions of Science Fiction Frames ....................................... 126
Intrusions of the “Transworld Identity” ..................................... 127
Simulacra’s Claim of the Real .............................................. 129
CHAPTER IV: CLASSICAL METAPHYSICAL ISSUES REVISITED  A POSTMODERN RECONSIDERATION .......................... 134
Determinism vs. Indeterminism ........................................ 134
The Metaphysics of Death ............................................... 150
The Issue of God in the post-Nietzschean Epoch .................. 158
Searching for an Alternative to Divine Transcendence .......... 163

CHAPTER V: TOWARDS THE POSTMODERN METAPHYSICS OF SUBJECTIVITY 169
Historical Origins of the Modern Self ................................. 169
The Decline of Cartesian Subjectivity in American Drama ........ 172
Postmodern Concepts of Subjectivity – Proclamations of the Death of the Modern Self ........................................ 178
Sam Shepard – Denials of Cartesian Subjectivity .................. 181
The Destabilized Subjectivity of the Early Plays ................. 181
The Divided Self – Schizoid Subjects ................................ 185
The Becoming, Performing Self ...................................... 195
David Rabe – The Unstable Postmodern Self ....................... 200
Quantum Subjectivity .................................................. 200
David Rabe’s Realist Plays – Tenuous Posthumanist Subjectivity .................................................. 204
David Mamet – Attenuated Cartesian Subjects of Attenuated Realism ........................................ 208

CHAPTER VI: POSTMODERN UNSTABLE WORLD ONTOLOGY REFLECTED IN DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND STAGE DIRECTIONS .................................. 215
Metaphysics Reflected in the Structure and Theatricality of Western Drama ........................................ 215
The Late Modernist Assault on the Newtonian Ontology through Violations of the “Well-Made Play” Mode .................................................. 219
Shepard, Rabe and Mamet: Denying the Ontological Promise of the “Well-Made Play” ..................................... 222
Mock Realism Mocking the Longing for an Ontological Certainty .................................................. 235
Metatheatrical Subversion of Naïve Ontological Realism ......... 246
Setting the Stage and Arranging Time-Space in Violation of Naïve Ontological Realism ............................... 248
Fighting Dramatic Realism with Its Own Weapon – Superrealism, a Realist Overkill ...................................... 252
Conclusion ........................................................................ 256

Works Cited .................................................................. 264
Primary Sources – Sam Shepard, David Rabe, David Mamet ........ 264
Secondary Sources ...................................................... 266
Electronic Sources ....................................................... 275
Index ............................................................................. 279