



A Lie of the Mind

Sam Shepard

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Dramatizes how individuals misperceive the world.

A Lie of the Mind Details

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From Reader Review *A Lie of the Mind* for online ebook

Aamir Shehzad says

sam

Spencer Korey says

Wasnt the biggest fan of this play. Perhaps it hut abut too close to home? Perhaps its because none of the characters changed? Its a great play that gives insight into the trap of family and unhappiness.

Melissa Luna says

These people are so awful that I actually felt physically sick after reading this play. That said, it has some wonderful lines.

Justin Hudnall says

Out and out my favorite Shepard play, and I'm a big Shepard fan. He should be credited for coining the phrase, "lie of the mind," as this is the best work I've read to capture the act committed by reality changers, the willful blindness to the undesirable.

Isaac Timm says

Maybe it will grow on me, It was enjoyable but just not as good as True West

mwpm says

A Lie of the Mind opens on both side of a phone conversation between Jake and Frankie. During the course of their phone conversation, we learn that Jake and Frankie are brothers, that Frankie has beaten his wife to death (or so he thinks), and that Frankie is trying to locate Jake before he does any more damage (to himself or someone else).

Jake's wife, Beth, is not dead, but hospitalized with severe brain damage. She is joined by her brother, Mike, and later by their parents. Jake and Frankie are joined by their sister, Sally, and their mother.

In fact, the attack has left both Jake and Beth helpless in their care of their families. Beth is brain damaged, reduced to varying states of coherence/incoherence. Jake is despondent, believing he has killed his wife. Admittedly, I take issue with the depiction of both Jake and Beth.

I believe Jake the abusive husband, his over-the-top demeanor suiting his character, but I don't believe Jake the victim, acting erratically. What redeems his character is the suggestion that we're not supposed to believe Jake the victim. Sally, his sister, suggests that he is pretending, having seen it all before.

With Beth, Shepard's depiction of a woman with brain damage is constantly skirting bad taste. Her varying coherence/incoherence, that sometimes descends into "savage" screaming, is evocative of a tired stereotype, the hysterical woman. This is corroborated by her family history: her grandmother was mentally ill, and later her mother shows signs of mental illness. There may be believable aspects to her character, specifically during her recovery. But overall, Shepard's portrayal of Beth's mental illness is problematic.

The best argument in favour of Shepard's portrayal of Beth (and her mental illness) is that Shepard is less concerned with plausibility, and more concerned with an archetypal approach to Beth's character. Just as she has been stripped down to her base/raw attributes, so too she is able to strip down other characters.

"This - this is my father. He's given up love. Love is dead for him. My mother is dead for him. Things live for him to be killed. Only death counts for him. Nothing else. This - This - This is me. This is me now. The way I am. Now. This. All. Different. I- I live inside this. Remember. Remembering. You. You - were one. I know you. I know - love. I know what love is. I can never forget. That. Never." (Act 2, Scene 1)

The play is commonly criticized (on Goodreads) for its abject characters. Indeed, they are abject. But I consider this to be one of the play's strengths. Readers familiar with Sam Shepard will recognize these characters. Having read a number of Shepard's plays, it occurs to me that his characters are drawn from the same source. They are derivative not of cliché/charicature, but of archetype.

The brothers Jake and Frankie resemble the brothers of *True West*, one hopelessly lost and the other with his feet seemingly on the ground (although his footing will surely be tested).

The most prominent of Shepard's archetypes may be the dysfunctional family. I doubt I've read a Shepard play with a functional family. (You may be inclined to ask: "What is a functional family?" A valid question. Suffice to say that Shepard's families are far from functional.) Shepard's outlook on the family unit recalls the opening lines of

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Although we encounter similar dynamics (rivalry, spite, abandonment, etc...), Shepard's unhappy families are uniquely unhappy. Particularly in the case of *A Lie of the Mind*, comparable to the families of *Buried Child* and *Curse of the Starving Class*.

Ali says

Love, honesty and pain, but not hollywood cliché at all!

Reading what so ever written by Shepard means going through a shortened social history of America after ww II, and up till the end of 20.century. Plots are so simple and dialogues are not very much sophisticated.

Maybe some of works by Shepard are not as interesting as the others, but for those whom are interested in sociology, and drama as writing-art, will enjoy reading or watching works by Shepard. Reading simple and plain plays by Shepard gives you dare to sit and write about whatsoever plot you have in your mind. Many of his plays are so easy, but honest, fluent and great as well. After watching Paris, Texas by Wenders, I believe Wenders shots matches with Shepard's atmosphere and dialogues. "Few American playwrights have exerted as much influence on the contemporary stage as Sam Shepard. His plays are performed on and off Broadway and in all the major regional American theatres. They are also widely performed and studied in Europe, finding both a popular and a scholarly audience" .

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Mosa Bolas says

It is a great play of sam shepard

Terry says

Started out good, but fizzled out.

Gabriela Urquia says

Beth broke my heart in two! Shepard has a way of writing only what news to be said. It's a great, fast read. I read it three times in a row and each time found something new in it.

Megan Huggins says

I have no idea what just happened. I just know it's about liberation, and complicated families, and forgiveness. It's a beautiful play, but I am totally confused. Hopefully, I'll be able to clarify it soon. Definitely read it, but be prepared to think hard. It's a little absurd, and I think very metaphorical. Quite a powerful play, but I'm not sure how things are resolved for anyone, except Jake and Beth seem to... reconcile somehow. Interesting. And very, very beautiful.

Brixton says

On pg 38, Tonto meets Snoop-Dogg (please mentally add as many [sic]s as grammatically necessary): "You-- You a love. You-- You are only that. Only. You don' know. Only love. Good. You. Mother. You. Always love. Always. But he lies to me. Like I'm gone. Not here. Lies and tellz me iz for love. Iz not for love! Iz pride!"

It is dialogue like this which contributed to me taking a full month to read something which, if seen in the theatre, would have played out in two hours. I must conclude that attending a performance of this play would have *felt like* spending a full month in an uncomfortable seat.

You know those times in a movie where something is supposed to be sooper-serious and you can tell they wanted you to be really moved by something an actor says, but instead it makes you burst out laughing in disbelief of its corny melodrama? This is that line, copied exactly as it appears on pg 21: "HEEZ MY HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAART!!!" Yep, 2 capital E's, a capital Z, and no less than 16 capital A's (I counted-- twice). I wonder how long the author agonised over the potential dramatic differences between 15, 16, or 17 capital A's (or, hey, can we get some consistency here? Shouldn't "always" and "lies" in the passage above be spelled with Z's too?).

And finally, during what is no doubt expected to be a significant symbolic gesture/event (I can tell, since it was lifted right out of Chekhov's *The Seagull*), the author counts heavily on his audience being as dain bramaged as his sexy-sexy, oh-but-she's-a-slut-too-so-let's-have-her-beaten-nearly-to-death-by-her-suffering-husband character Beth, when her brother Mike comes in and dumps a full back half of a buck on the living room floor-- an animal he shot *just minutes before*-- and says he doesn't need to chop it up into dinner any time soon because, "It's frozen solid. Won't thaw out for hours yet" (pg 61). Well dang, if it's cold enough outside to freeze a large living animal solid within minutes after its death, ya gotta wonder how any part of Mike himself made it back to the house intact enough to tell us about it. (And good luck to the props people who take work on this play. I imagine the full back half of a solidly frozen buck is mighty heavy and papier-mâché isn't going to cut it any more than Mike wants to.)

Awful, stupid, and insulting to any degree of intelligence. Sam Shepard's two-time Oscar-winning wife, Jessica Lange, must have been giving Oscar-worthy performances the rest of us could not see every time she told him, "It's good, honey!" (or should that be, "IZ GOOD. HUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUNEE!!!"?)

Greg says

This is one of my favorite Shepard plays, from 1986. It has those signature things we love about Shepard: intense, desperate characters who experience the pain of love; brilliant, honest, raw, fluent dialogue; incredibly eccentric behavior that still seems plausible; and a sense of mystery or underlying menace.

Nathan Albright says

I am seriously the most unlucky person when it comes to reviewing this play. As might be fairly obvious, I

am a frequent reader and reviewer of drama [1]. It so happens that I picked up this book to read and review yesterday from the library, and it so happens that after finishing reading the book during my lunch break at work but before writing it, I find out that the actor/playwright died today. It is said that it is rude to speak ill of the dead, but in the interest of honesty I'm going to have to bring the hammer down on this play. This is the sort of play that gives voice to the contempt that people from New York and Los Angeles have for the country in between. This is a play about us by them, and it is very obvious that the author has little sympathy for the people here that he mocks and insults. Contempt does not wear well on a playwright, as this play is not a good one largely because one can tell that the author has little or no sympathy for most of the people in the play.

This is a three act play about people in two dysfunctional families joined by the marriage of the son of one family with the daughter of another. Jake is a troubled man who nearly beat his estranged wife, an actress unfaithful to him at least emotionally, to death out of jealousy. His wife, Beth, is not entirely of sound mind and confuses her brother-in-law for her husband, the brother-in-law himself being stuck at the family's house because he is shot by Beth's father who mistakes him for a buck. Meanwhile, Mike, Beth's brother, is threatening harm to anyone in Jake's family. It's not as if Jake's family is any less dysfunctional, with a possessive mother who turns arsonist and a less favored daughter who Jake's mother blames for his departure to go back to his wife, which ends in failure in Act 3. While this is the sort of play that gives actors the chance to be emotionally expressive, there is very little that is redeeming about the play as a whole. The most sympathetic characters here are a brain-damaged adulteress and her kind adulterous brother-in-law. Almost everyone else here is portrayed in the most repellent way possible for a play like this.

Ultimately, this is a play that has contempt for Middle America and people of family values and rural backgrounds. It portrays families as fostering co-dependency, and has nearly 100 pages of dialogue in which hardly anyone is listening to what anyone else is saying. There is yelling and screaming, a house is burned down, people are shot and beat up and treated like horses, but there is precious little in the way of genuine communication. The people in this play don't care what anyone else thinks or feels. They are acting out of their own neuroses, their own drives, their own longings, their own frustrations, and simply don't care about anyone else. The author gives very little reasons why any of us should care about the people in this play, especially when he seems to be insulting anyone who is from a background in rural America between the two coasts with the poor choice of quotes he makes about farmers and people in the country by H.L. Mencken. If there is a lie in the mind, it is in the mind of the playwright, in this libelous portrayal of American life.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2016...>

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Jillian says

Compelling and super depressing. The whole play is about the addiction to attachment and avoidance people have when they haven't resolved their childhood demons. Sad and imaginative. Shepard is a genius.

Shaan says

A Lie of the Mind

Ian says

Headstrong extrovert overly dramatic American dialogue and acting, lacking finesse or charm.

Carmen says

Fantastically dark play that is an amazing commentary on domestic abuse. Absolutely loved it.

Diana Stevan says

A shocking portrayal of a family.

Kevin says

I loved the dysfunctional families laid bare throughout this story. The use of empty space between different locations was visually engaging even though I only read the play.
