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**Sibling Relationships As Depicted In Sam Shepard's Play True West**  
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**Abstract:**

Sam Shepard (1943- ) is one of the most prominent modern American playwrights. Up till now he has written almost 50 plays. He has gained a reputation as one of America's foremost living playwrights. His works have found deep spirit in the nation's cultural imagination as he has spoken in a convincing way to American theatre audience.

The family relationship is one of the American myths. Besides, Fathers escaping to another land, brothers fighting brothers and mothers as off-stage voices or oppressive presences are some of the themes dealt with in modern American plays. This study deals with sibling relationships as depicted in Sam Shepard's play *True West*. This play is concerned with two brothers who strive to understand each other but they represent totally contrast types, so the play ends with a never-ending conflict.

The absence of the father, and the partial absence of the mother, besides the continuous struggle and misunderstanding of the two brothers show the broken or weak relationships between them.

Sam Shepard is one of the most prominent modern American playwrights, actor, and director. Till now he has written almost 50 plays. He has gained a reputation as one of America's foremost living playwrights. His works have found deep spirit in the nation's cultural imagination as he has spoken in a convincing way to American theatre audience.

He is the author of several books of short stories, and essays. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1979 for his play *Buried Child*. He was born on November 5, 1943, in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. At the age of twenty, he found himself working in the Bishop's Company Repertory Players to support himself. Then his career as a playwright started. He also became a screen actor. He has done a considerable amount of teaching on writing plays and other aspects of theatre. His classes and seminars have occurred at various theatre workshops, and universities.<sup>1</sup>

In 1971, he travelled to England investigating himself and improving his career as a playwright. His experience in England proved essential in

emphasizing his view of cultural difference and illuminated his sense of his own American heritage.<sup>2</sup>

In fact the period of 1970s of America was marked by many significant events including humiliating retreat from Vietnam and the resignation of an American president in addition to the decline in national economic productivity causing a jobless rate not seen since the end of World War II. In the 1980s, the situations became different. The election of Ronald Reagan signaled a new era in the life of the nation that would have remarkable political and social effect. The revolution of Reagan brought a new attitude toward governmental social policy. The 1980s can be regarded as a reaction against the liberal social and political attitude of previous years.<sup>3</sup>

After returning to America, Shepard raised to popularity in the 1980s as if his years in England had prepared him to become a great American playwright.

During the 1980s, the experimental theatre became popular. Sam Shepard enacted a new concept in theatre in which action and language were subsumed in image.<sup>4</sup>

Shepard was the real voice of the individual representing their private fears. His characters enact their repressed anxieties and depressed lives in a postmodernist set and setting. He brought the despair and humour of the Americans on the stage. His characters struggle, unsuccessfully, to find some authentic force in places devoid of comfort and a world filled with shattered families.<sup>5</sup>

Shepard uses the experiences of the family as an American myth. The Starvation of family in Shepard's plays can never really be satisfied. The absence of the father, the struggle between brothers in addition to the fragility of mother's role mark Shepard's family.

Shepard's play, *True West*, deals with two brothers who strive to understand each other but they represent totally contrast types, so the play ends with a never-ending conflict between them. The two brothers chose different ways in their life. Austin, the educated one, has a family and a successful job as a Hollywood screenwriter. On the contrary, Lee is unemployed and homeless. He has spent most of his time in the desert. The struggle between the two

brothers starts when Lee tries to interfere in his brother's work as they exchange their roles.

Generally, the characters in Shepard's plays are strangers. The family members are alienated from each other as if they lost the ability to communicate. The gap between them broadens by time. In *True West*, as in Shepard's other plays, there is a complex family relationship due to the sense of isolation that prevails in modern American drama. Shepard explained the sense of isolation in his interview (1988) saying:

I have arrived at a point where I'm not interested in anything that doesn't have a kind of wholeness to it. I'm not interested anymore in little fragmented bits and pieces stuff that might be interesting for five minutes. I need something that has a sense of being a story that's already been told ... and that you're just coming to it ... What's most frightening to me right now is this estrangement from life. People and things are becoming more and more removed from the actual. We are becoming more and more removed from the Earth to the point that people just don't know themselves or each other or anything. We're this incredible global race of strangers...That's terrifying. Things are so dispensable now. People live together for a while...then they split, and they never see each other again. Then they get together with somebody else-split. Have kids-split. Then the kids never see each other. It's absolutely frightening-this incessant estrangement...People are being amputated from each other and from themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Here in *True West*, desert isolates Lee. At the beginning Austin sees that isolation as a horrible thing that can lead him to madness as he asks Lee if he did not miss people and then he says: "AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean I go crazy if I have to spend three nights in a motel by myself." Then he becomes eager to be isolated in the same desert. He regards his brother's life as series of adventures: "AUSTIN: Oh, I don't know. Different places. Adventures. You were always on some adventure" (I, 1, p.2) .

The image of the father plays the main role in maintaining the unity of the family. In *True West*, the father deserted his family years ago. The two brothers, though leading different types of life, meet in imitating their father in liking to live in the desert as Lee says to Austin: "You sound just like the old man now" (I, 7, p.41). In this respect, C. W. E. Bigsby refers to the similarity between the two brothers saying:

The irony is the greater when the two are merely aspects of the same self, drawn equally to solitude and the public world of social action, to the construction of artistic form and the celebration of anarchy.<sup>7</sup>

Lee refers to the father as “the old man” as if the father had no name. Even he does not call him father. He wants to say the old man seeded in his sons the illusion of the desert as a means to escape from the sordid reality. Leslie A. Wade conveys that reality saying:

The father of the play (off-stage and unseen) also proves ineffective and withdrawn, having retreated to live in alcoholic isolation in the desert.... The parental dysfunction in the play signals a wider existential unease for the brothers, neither of whom feels comfortably situated in his life. Both confess a want of control and a strong desire for alternative possibilities.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, this play can be regarded as an autobiographical play. Austin and Lee represent Shepard himself as Don Shewey, in his book *Sam Shepar*, mentions:

There's a lot about *True West* that is explicitly autobiographical. Like Austin, Shepard himself has put in time as a would-be screenwriter, but he's also been known to share in Lee's sticky fingers: in his book *Motel Chronicles*, he describes an attempt to steal a practically worthless painting from a room in the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood. And all the stuff in the play about "the old man" clearly relates to Shepard's father.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, autobiographical elements in the play are seen in Shepard's bad relation with his violent alcoholic father which is reflected in the family relations of the characters. C. W. E. Bigsby refers to that complex relationship between Shepard and his father saying:

It is tempting to root this concern in Shepard's own difficult and extremely ambiguous relationship with his own father, also an alcoholic who abandoned the family. Plainly there is a risk of becoming the thing you fear. The family becomes a closed system replicating its tensions and contradictions. The prevailing sense is one of claustrophobia. Not only are his characters trapped inside their own skins for life, they are caught in a biological trap which condemns them to re-enactment. They are also trapped in the absurdity of relationships on which they rely for meaning and survival but which are equally the source of pain.<sup>10</sup>

Actually, Lee seems jealous of his brother as he knows that their mother prefers Austin to him. Their mother asked Lee to take care of the house while she vacationed in Alaska. The following conversation between the two brothers indicates the feeling of Lee:

AUSTIN: Well, she knew I was coming down here so she offered me the place.

LEE: You keepin' the plants watered?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

LEE: Keepin' the sink clean? She don't like even a single tea leaf in the sink ya' know.

AUSTIN: (trying to concentrate on writing) Yeah, I know.

(pause)

LEE: She gonna' be up there a long time?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

LEE: Kinda' nice for you, huh? Whole place to yourself. (I, 1, p.2)

It is clear in this conversation that Lee wants to say to Austin that he also knows his mother's habits. At the same time, he wants to say that Austin has succeeded in occupying his mother's house as well as her heart. Jealousy is one of the serious reasons behind the bad relation between the two brothers. In the following conversation, Lee declares that he has a right in his mother's house just as Austin:

AUSTIN: Well, you can stay here as long as I'm here.

LEE: I don't need your permission do I?

AUSTIN: No.

LEE: I mean she's my mother too, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

LEE: She might've just as easily asked me to take care of her place as you.

AUSTIN: That's right.

LEE: I mean I know how to water plants. (I, 1, p.5)

At the end, the feeling of jealousy transforms from Lee to Austin as Austin tells Lee that he wants to come with him to live in the desert. Austin discovers that Lee's life is better than his.

At the beginning, Austin is shown as being proud of having family and job and Lee also feels jealous about that as he says: "Oh, that's right, you got the wife and kiddies now don't ya'. The house, the car, the whole slam. That's right" (I, 1, p.8) , so Austin asks him to come with him to North in order to stay with his family.

Though Lee is eager to live his brother's life as he says: "Besides, I always wondered what'd be like to be you" (I, 4, p.28), The desert seems as a paradise for him as he describes it to Austin: "Like a paradise. Kinda' place that sorta' kills ya' inside. Warm yellow lights. Mexican tile all around. Copper pots hangin' over the stove. Ya' know like they got in the magazines. Blonde people movin' in and outa' the rooms, talkin' to each other. (pause) Kinda' place you wish you sorta' grew up in, ya' know. (I, 2, p.11)

Lee is not a writer as he confesses: "Yeah. Contemporary Western. Based on a true story. 'Course I'm not a writer like my brother here. I'm not a man of the pen." (I, 3, p.19) But he knows about the reality of the west more than Austin because he lived in that place. Lee tells Saul Kimmer, the Hollywood producer, that he has an idea for a contemporary Western movie saying: "I mean plenty a' guys have stories don't they? True-life stories. Musta' been a lotta' movies made from real life" (I, 3, p.19) .

It is supposed that Austin is better than Lee in leading a successful life. His feeling changes when Lee starts to steal his brother's life. So he becomes dissatisfied with his own successful life. Lee claims that Saul liked the outline of his story so much. Austin takes a bottle of his mother's champagne to celebrate and then learns that he is to write the script of Lee's outline rather than work on his own script. Austin becomes angry and calls Lee's story the "dumbest" he has ever heard in his life. So jealousy transforms from Lee to Austin as the following conversation shows:

AUSTIN: He liked that story! Your story?

LEE: Yeah! What's so surprisin' about that?

AUSTIN: It's stupid! It's the dumbest story I ever heard in my life.

LEE: Hey, hold on! That's my story yer takin' about!

AUSTIN: It's a bullshit story! It's idiotic. Two lamebrains chasing each other across Texas! ... (I, 5, p.32)

Though Austin finds Lee's story unreal as he says "It's not like real life! It's not enough like real life. Things don't happen like that," (I, 4, p.23) but the producer suggests having Austin write an outline for Lee's story. Lee becomes proud of his story as he says: "I didn't do nothin' to him! He liked my story. Pure and simple. He said it was the best story he's come across in a long, long time" (I, 5, p.32) .

Competition is another reason behind the fragility of the relationship between the brothers. It reflects the system in the American capitalistic society. When Austin and Lee start to have the same work, the competition

appears and adds hatred to their relationship as the following conversation indicates:

LEE: What's yer idea?

AUSTIN: It's just a simple love story.

LEE: What kinda' love story?

AUSTIN: (stands, crosses into kitchen) I'm not telling you!

LEE: Ha! 'Fraid I'll steal it huh? Competition's gettin' kinda' close to home isn't it? (I, 5, p.33)

In fact, Shepard uses the dilemma of a family to represent the reality of the American family and society, as Richard Gray says:

Shepard uses the experiences of a family over two days to explore the national hunger. Everyone, it seems, is taught by American culture to feel incomplete without the endless chain of commodities the institutions of capitalism produce. Starvation is the natural condition of this family, and Americans generally, because they are stimulated to wants, to experience a need, that can never really be satisfied.<sup>11</sup>

Saul thinks that the two brothers will help each other in writing the story as Lee has the idea and Austin is the experienced writer who could transform that idea into a script. He believes that as they are brothers so there will be familiarity between them:

SAUL: Austin, there's no point in our going to another screenwriter for this. It just doesn't make sense. You're brothers. You know each other. There's a familiarity with the material that just wouldn't be possible otherwise.

AUSTIN: There's no familiarity with the material! None! I don't know what "Tornado County"(I, 5, p.34)

Saul thinks that the two brothers will complete one another. Saul's regarding the two brothers as a pair refers to Shepard's use of the duality in this play as in his other plays. That duality causes the terrible and impossible relationship between the two brothers. Stephen J. Bottoms regards the duality as one of the main themes in this play saying:

Austin and Lee are bound together in dualistic, complementary pairs: each character appears to represent one side of a double-headed coin. Yet, as ever in Shepard's work, duality leads not to a healthy balance, but to perpetual division.<sup>12</sup>

Austin refuses to write the script to his brother. He says that story is the “dumbest” story that he has ever heard in his life. In fact, the real reason behind his refusal is jealousy. He cannot accept that Lee will become a writer and he is just aiding him in writing that story, so he insists on his refusal: “I'm not doing this script! I'm not writing this crap for you or anybody else. You can't blackmail me into it. You can't threaten me into it. There's no way I'm doing it. So just give it up. Both of you” (I, 6, p.35) .

Saul says that Lee's story attracts him because Lee has “Raw talent”, so he goes with what his instincts tell him that the story “has the ring of truth”. Austin revolts against Saul's speech and defends his own story:

SAUL: Something about the real West.

AUSTIN: Why? Because it's got horses? Because it's got grown men acting like little boys?

SAUL: Something about the land. Your brother is speaking from experience.

AUSTIN: So am I!

SAUL: But nobody's interested in love these days, Austin. Let's face it.

LEE: That's right. (I, 6, p.37)

At the beginning Lee ridicules Austin's work then the roles are changed. Austin ridicules Lee's inability to write scripts and he is sure that Lee has no thoughts:

AUSTIN: (laughs) A thought! Here's a thought for ya'--

LEE: I'm not askin' fer yer thoughts! I got my own. I can do this thing on my own. (I, 7, p.38)

Lee's stealing of his brother's life is the main reason behind the transformation in the character of Austin. Suddenly Austin finds that his brother has become a writer, so he wants to become a thief like his brother: “This is true. This is very true. An advance. (pause) Well, maybe I oughta' go out and try my hand at your trade. Since you're doing so good at mine” (I, 7, p.39) .

Austin ridicules his brother by saying: “Oh, so now you're gonna' kick me out! Now I'm the intruder. I'm the one who's invading your precious privacy” (I, 7, p.40) . He means that Lee is the intruder. But now, Austin himself becomes the intruder in his mother's house by changing the roles.

As a result, jealousy leads to exchanging the roles between the two brothers as Susan C. W. Abbotson mentions:

However, the differences between Lee and Austin become blurred as they each try to take on characteristics of the other, provoked by envy for the life each sees the other as leading, and in search of their own missing egos. Austin is drawn to the romantic possibilities of his brother's independent life out in the desert, just as Lee wonders what life would be like as a member of the steady middle class, making a living by the less dangerous process of writing about life rather than living it.<sup>13</sup>

For Austin North represents a calm place which reflects his own life before his brother's coming. He believes that place has become far away from him now because he wants to change that calm life as he wants to live his brother's life. At the same time he still respects his past life as he says: "North. North of here. Up in the North country where things are calm. I don't need any help. I'm gonna' go outside and I'm gonna' steal a toaster. I'm gonna' steal some other stuff too. I might even commit bigger crimes. Bigger than you ever dreamed of. Crimes beyond the imagination!" (I, 7, p.41). So he wants to commit crimes like his brother and even he wants to have more criminal acts than his brother. He also wants to become superior to his brother in the criminal acts. Actually that reflects his surreptitious suffering from his past life. Leslie A. Wade says:

Austin suffers the numbing effects of middle-class accumulation... In fact, as the play nears its end, Austin voices a readiness to renounce his lifestyle and to jettison his job and family.<sup>14</sup>

Lee defies Austin that he cannot be like him even he cannot steal toasts. But Austin proves to him that he is better than him even in his work. Austin wonders if the criminal people cannot feel pity for their victims after stealing numerous toasters from neighbourhood houses. He means that his brother is a criminal and that he is his victim. He means that his brother has stolen his life from him, but Lee seems not to understand him:

AUSTIN: Is that the correct criminal psychology? Not to think of the victims?

LEE: What victims?

(LEE takes another swipe at typewriter with nine-iron, adds pages to the fire)

AUSTIN: The victims of crime. Of breaking and entering. I mean is it a prerequisite for a criminal not to have a conscience?

LEE: Ask a criminal. (I, 8, p.45)

In Fact, Lee cannot continue writing the script so he asks for his brother's help, but Austin ridicules him as he knows that Lee does not understand the meaning of character:

LEE: The guys. The guys in the story.

AUSTIN: Those aren't characters.

LEE: Whatever you call 'em then. I need to write somethin' out.

AUSTIN: Those are illusions of characters.

LEE: I don't give a damn what ya' call 'em! You know what I'm talkin' about!

AUSTIN: Those are fantasies of a long lost boyhood. (I, 7, p.42)

Lee's asking Austin to give him a pen refers to his weakness in writing and that Austin is a man of pen. Austin ridicules him saying that he was a writer in the past, but now Lee becomes the writer and he is supposed to have a pen:

AUSTIN: I don't have a pen.

LEE: Gimme a pencil then!

AUSTIN: I don't have a pencil.

LEE: (to phone) Just a second, operator. (to AUSTIN) Yer a writer and ya' don't have a pen or a pencil!

AUSTIN: I'm not a writer. You're a writer. (I, 8, p.49)

Austin's decision to go to the desert reflects his dissatisfaction with his successful life. So he asks Lee to take him to the desert, but Lee does not accept. Lee's refusal to take his brother indicates his consideration of his brother's successful life and his fear of losing that life. At the same time he knows that his brother cannot bear that new life in the west:

AUSTIN: What if I come with you, Lee?

LEE: (pause as LEE turns toward AUSTIN) What?

AUSTIN: What if I come with you out to the desert?

LEE: Are you kiddin'?

AUSTIN: No. I'd just like to see what it's like.

LEE: You wouldn't last a day out there pal. (I, 8, p.50)

Though their mother has a limited role in the play, but it seems that she has an effect on her sons. Both of them try to explain to her the reason behind the mess in the house. The appearance of their mother at the end of the play makes Lee feel ashamed of trying to steal his brother's life. It seems that Lee tries to stop his brother from going to the desert. The mother reminds

Austin that he has a family, so he must stay with them as if she were speaking with her husband who deserted his family.

Austin is ready by the end of the play to kill his own brother. The mother does not believe that Austin will really kill his brother: “MOM: He won't kill you. He's your brother”. (I, 9, p.61) But Austin is changed even he does not pay any attention to his mother's begging to leave Lee saying: “I can kill him! I can easily kill him. Right now. Right here. All I gotta' do is just tighten up. See?” (I, 9, p.62).

As their father left them in the past, their mother also leaves them while they are quarreling with each other. She may feel tired of her sons who have become just like their father. She says: “I can't stay here. This is worse than being homeless.” (I, 9, p.62). Austin asks his mother to stay but she refuses because she says that she cannot recognize her place referring that she cannot recognize her own sons who exchanged their personalities:

MOM: I can't stay here. This is worse than being homeless.

AUSTIN: Stay here, Mom. This is where you live. (she looks around the stage)

MOM: I don't recognize it at all. (I, 9, p.63)

The absent father and the fragile mother form the main reasons behind the conflict and the misunderstanding between the two brothers as Susan Abbotson states:

A further cause of the brothers' antagonism stems from the fragmented state of their family, the parents lured away by a promise of freedom that is nothing more than a refusal of responsibility. The father, an alcoholic living in the desert, abandoned his offspring long ago. The mother similarly escapes by vacationing in Alaska and has become totally disassociated from her children. She shows no concern over her destroyed kitchen or her sons, as one tries to throttle the other in front of her, and she refuses to see what is happening. Such parents indicate what Shepard sees as the spiritual death of the American family, and into this spiritual gap the brothers seek to place an image of something that might sustain them.<sup>15</sup>

The play ends with a never-ending conflict between the two brothers. The two brothers' continuous conflict reflects the fragility in family relationship. Jealousy, competition, and alienation dominate the relation

between the two brothers. The absence of the father and weak role of the mother are the main reasons behind the loss of understanding between the two brothers.

The fragility of the relationship between the two brothers reflects the reality of sibling relationships in the American society. The characters in this play live broken lives. The connection between themselves and their families has been broken reflecting America itself. Christopher Bigsby describes Shepard's characters saying:

His characters live discontinuous lives. Some connection has been broken between themselves and the past (mythic and historical), between themselves and their families, their lovers, even the language they speak. Experience comes in fragments. Emotions flare up and quixotically turn into their opposites. America itself seems deracinated. His is a world of distant echoes, of narratives that have lost their point, individuals who have simplified their lives out of anxiety or passion.<sup>16</sup>

The following conversation between the two brothers in the play conveys the awful reality of the family relationship in the American society:

AUSTIN: You're my brother.

LEE: That don't mean a thing. You go down to the L.A. Police Department there and ask them what kinda' people kill each other the most. What do you think they'd say?

AUSTIN: Who said anything about killing?

LEE: Family people. Brothers. Brothers-in-law. Cousins. Real American-type people. They kill each other in the heat mostly. In the Smog-Alerts. In the Brush Fire Season. Right about this time a' year. (I, 4, p.25)

To sum up, one might say that Sam Shepard absolutely understands the reality of the American society and the weakness in sibling relationships in that society. *True West* represents an obvious illustration of two American rival brothers. Gradually, these two brothers lose their relation as brothers. Jealousy between them transforms into hatred. The abhorrence makes them isolated from each other, then from their society, so they become strangers. The separation of the father and mother plays a remarkable role in weakening that relation, as they lose the control over their children. It is clear that the two brothers love their father, seen in their imitating him, and love their mother, seen in their trying to preserve her home. Actually, they need their authority, but they cannot find them. Finally, it can be said that

the society is responsible for breaking the family relationship. The American capitalistic society is built on competition and this reflected in the relations of the two brothers. As they want to do the same job, the conflict between them start without stopping.

### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> David Krasner, ed., *A Companion to Twentieth-Century American Drama* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), p.285.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.286.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.290.

<sup>4</sup> C. W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama: 1900-1940*. Vol.2, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 165.

<sup>5</sup> Joann Cerrito and Laurie DiMauro, eds., *Modern American Literature*. Vol.1 (London: St. James Press, 1999), p.227.

<sup>6</sup> Bigsby, p.171.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Krasner, p.293.

<sup>9</sup> James A. Crank, *Understanding Sam Shepard* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina press, 2012), p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> Bigsby, p.56.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Gray, *A History of American Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004) p. 716.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen J. Bottoms, *The Theatre of Sam Shepard: State of Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> Susan C. W Abbotson, *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 2003) p. 229.

<sup>14</sup> Krasner, p.294.

<sup>15</sup> Abbotson, p.230.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Roudane, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sam Shepard*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 27–28.

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## العلاقات الأخوية كما تظهر في مسرحية سام شيبيرد (الغرب الحقيقي)

أ.م.د. نجدت كاظم موسى      م.م. زينب عصمت صفاء الدين

جامعة كركوك/ كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

### المُلخَص:

يُعدُّ سام شيبيرد (١٩٤٣-) واحداً من أبرز الكتاب المسرحيين الأمريكيين المعاصرين. وقد كتب حتى الان ما يقرب الخمسين من المسرحيات. وقد شغلت أعماله مكانة عميقة في الخيال الثقافي للبلاد كونه تحدث بطريقة مقنعة لجمهور المسرح الأمريكي. والعلاقة العائلية هي واحدة من الأساطير الأمريكية كما وان هروب الآباء إلى أراضٍ أخرى ومحاربة الاخوة لبعضهم البعض ووجود الامهات بوصفها اصوات خارج المسرح او كيانات قمعية هي بعض المواضيع التي تتناولها المسرحيات الامريكية. تتناول هذه الدراسة العلاقات الاخوية كما تظهر في مسرحية سام شيبيرد "الغرب الحقيقي". تتناول هذه المسرحية اثنين من الاخوة الذين يسعيان جاهدين لفهم بعضهما البعض ولكنهما يمثلان نماذجاً شخصية متناقضة تماماً، وبالتالي فإن المسرحية تنتهي بصراع لا ينتهي بينهما. إن غياب الأب، والغياب الجزئي للأُم، إلى جانب الصراع المستمر وسوء الفهم بين الأخوين يوضح العلاقات المقطوعة أو الضعيفة بينهم.

