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Auszug aus:

"True West" Sam Shepard

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| Thema: | <i>True West</i> – Sam Shepard |
| TMD: 28943 | |
| Kurzvorstellung des Materials: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam Shepard (*1943) is an American playwright and actor. After briefly studying agriculture he came into contact with the theatre and began writing plays. Besides being a writer, Shepard has also directed some screen plays. • The drama <i>True West</i> debuted in 1980 in San Francisco. It was first published in print in 1981. In 1984 the play was made into a movie. |
| Übersicht über die Teile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot overview • The structure of the play • Characters • Central conflict • Major themes and symbols • Reception of the play |
| Information zum Dokument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ca. 5,5 Seiten, Größe ca. 76 KByte |
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about her trip. Apparently, she has cut her vacation short because she missed her plants, which by now have all died, and because she believes that trouble is on the rise.

Austin tells her that he is going to the desert with Lee. Lee denies this, though, and when he tries to leave, Austin grabs the telephone cable and strangles Lee, threatening him and telling him to give his car keys back. Their mother has seen enough and leaves for a motel. Thinking that he has actually killed his brother, Austin begins to go, but Lee suddenly jumps up and blocks Austin's way.

The play ends with the two brothers facing each other threateningly.

The structure of the play

The play consists of two acts, which are divided into nine scenes. The first act comprises four scenes, while the second one contains five.

During the first act, the two major characters, the brothers Lee and Austin are introduced. The events continue up to Lee's return after playing golf with Saul Kimmer, the movie producer.

While the conflict between the brothers was only touched upon during the first act, during the second act, the conflict between the brothers worsens to the point where Austin assaults Lee physically.

The tense of the play is the present; there are no flashbacks or flash-forwards. Also, the play is set in the present. The place of the play is a suburb forty miles outside of Los Angeles. All action takes place in the kitchen and the adjoining alcove of Austin's and Lee's mother's house.

Characters

The two main characters of the drama are Austin and Lee.

Austin has graduated from an Ivy League school, therefore he has a very prestigious university degree. He works as a screenwriter. He is rather ambitious and has a wife, two kids and a producer. In the beginning of the play, he tells Lee that he is just doing "a little research"¹. Austin knows his place in the world and considers himself a worker, rather than an artist. He seems to be the opposite of Lee, who drifts about without a real grip on his life. During the course of the play this changes a lot. When his deal with Saul fails, Austin becomes more and more like his brother, until in the end their roles seem reversed. In the end of the play, Austin is the drunken thief and Lee is the one who takes his job seriously. Austin loses the outlook on life he had before and cannot appreciate his life with his job and his family anymore. Instead, he wishes to go to the desert with Lee.

Lee is the exact opposite of his brother. He arrives in the house as a drunk and a thief. Unlike Austin, he is unsuccessful in every aspect: he has no home, no family and no job. Lee is very violent and easily aroused. Before he arrived in the house, he has spent some months in the desert doing dog fights with a pit bull. At first it seems that Lee only arrived to bother Austin. He demands his car keys and physically threatens his brother when they argue about their father. Not only does Lee threaten Austin physically, though, he also steals his movie deal with Saul. As the play continues it seems that Lee is about to change into Austin, just as Austin changes into Lee. Lee becomes the one trying to type with one finger,

¹ Sam Shepard, *Sam Shepard: Plays 2*, London: Faber & Faber, 1997. p. 6



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