

## **Fantastic Narrative Spaces in Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A Lie of the Mind* (1985) is arguably one of Sam Shepard's most complex family plays. It displays Shepard's experiments with a fluid use of stage space and storytelling that is visually quite uncanny. In this study, we will attempt to shed light on the impossible along with the possible worlds projected in a textual fictional world in Shepard's play. Also examined are the "narrative spaces" and the "impossible/fantastic spaces" constructed in the play. Deploying Marie-Laure Ryan's views on space and possible worlds and Patricia García's model of space and its transgressions, we analyze space in the play, by and large, from two distinct perspectives: 1) the environment in which narrative is physically set up, or, to put it another way, as the medium in which narrative as a storyworld is projected and appreciated, and 2) the fantastic postmodern dramas that picture impossibilities. By deconstructing objective mapping, we argue that *A Lie of the Mind's* postmodern mapping aims to critique the earlier belief in claims of "truth of space" and tries to construct a totally subjective reality or architecture which summons the reader's mental activity to picture such a reality.

*Keywords:* Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*, Marie-Laure Ryan, Patricia García, possible worlds theory, impossible narrative spaces, postmodern fantastic drama

## Introduction: Narratology and Space

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson states that “[A] *certain spatial turn* has often seemed to offer one of the more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper,” the main concern of which has always been the “the experience of temporality” rooted in stream of consciousness (154; emphasis added). Up until the popularity of postmodernism, the narrative has mostly insisted on the foregrounding of temporality often conceived as comprised of a sequence of events. One of the prominent arguments favoring time over space is E. M. Forster’s basic formulation of plot in his classic example, “The king died, then the queen died of grief” (87), which does not include any reference to space. The other renowned theorist of time and narrative is Paul Ricoeur whose position regarding the significance of time as the ultimate reference of narrativity is exemplified in the following passage: “I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity, and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent” (165).<sup>1</sup>

However, Marie-Laure Ryan refers to Immanuel Kant’s philosophy which assumes that time and space are the “two fundamental categories that structure human experience” (*Narrating Space* 16). There is a host of theories which try to come to grips with the representation of narrative space, such as Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “chronotope” (1981), Seymour Chatman’s emphasis on “story space” and “discourse space” (1978), and Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1969). Likewise, one can add more recent theorists, such as postclassical narratologists, to this list, namely Gabriel Zoran (1984), Ruth Ronen (1986), Holly Taylor and Barbara Tversky (1992, 1996), David Herman (2001, 2002), Patricia García (2013, 2015), and Marie-Laure Ryan (2003, 2009, 2016). These are the figures whose ideas are of paramount importance to the present study, especially Ryan and García. Ryan is keen on the significance of space in narrative because, to her, it is the most important factor for “understanding the cognitive processing of stories” (*Narrating Space* 3-4). In her view, “space is an essential part of the mental act of narrative *world (re)construction*, since the imagination can only picture objects that present spatial extension” (*Narrating Space* 16; emphasis added).

### Ryan’s Layers of Narrative Space

Ryan mentions that “Narrative space extends from the individual object described in a narrative to the cosmic order in which the story takes place” (*Narrating Space* 23). In this sense, she proposes five basic levels of narrative space: the first level is “spatial frames” that are “the immediate surroundings of the characters.” They are, Ryan mentions, “filled with individual things, and they are defined by the set

of objects that they contain." For instance, a character's movement from the salon to the bedroom compels the reader to imagine different pieces of furniture. The second level is "setting" whereby "a relatively stable socio-historico-geographic category that embraces the entire text" does not change as in spatial frame. "Story space," as the third level, is the one "relevant to the plot, as mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters." It includes all the spatial frames plus the locations mentioned in the text but not shown, since they are not supposed to be the scene of the Textual Actual World (TAW) of the work. Moreover, the fourth level, "storyworld," is the story space entirely captured by the reader's imagination on the basis of the principle of minimal departure (a principle that instigates readers to construct their mental representations of fictional worlds based on their real experience and knowledge of the world on the assumption that this knowledge is not contradicted by the text). The storyworld of realistic texts is "conceived by the imagination as a coherent, unified, ontologically full, and materially existing geographical entity"; however, within the storyworld, there may exist some impossible spaces that do not cohere with the full world and are the matter of radical ontological differences. And, the fifth level, "narrative universe," as tightly associated with possible worlds theory, is the TAW plus all "the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, [F-Universes that include] dreams, fantasies, and imaginative creations" (*Narrating Space* 24-25).<sup>2</sup> Ryan also refers to the multiplicity of diegetic levels or levels of fictionality (*Narrating Space* 25), which will be discussed more later.

### **Impossible Spaces and the Postmodern Fantastic**

Ryan classifies impossible worlds as contradictions, ontological impossibility (or metalepsis), impossible space, impossible time, and impossible text ("Impossible Worlds" 368). However, in recent research on the postmodern drama, what appears to be of absolute note is the idea of impossible spaces that encompass the other impossibilities. On that account, the present study will also deploy Patricia García's model recently suggested in her groundbreaking book *Space and the Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary Literature: The Architectural Void* (2015). García's work mainly focuses on fiction, though it seems much easier to disrupt space in drama than in novels because it can be done visually. One of the contributions of the present paper, then, is the attempt to apply García's model to drama, which is not discussed in her book.

García defines the fantastic as follows: "The fantastic refers to a text, film, or theatrical piece in which a breach of the physical and logical laws of the storyworld occurs. This breach takes place within a realistic frame that the reader recognizes as very similar to his/her reality" ("Introduction" 12). García regards the storyworld

to be “the spatial frame” (“The Fantastic Hole” 22) that is more or less compatible with what Ryan describes as “the immediate surroundings of actual events, the various locations shown by the narrative discourse or by the image” (“Space” 421). She indicates that this particular “breach” engenders the modality of spatial impossibility within a possible realistic textual world; in other words, she states that “the impossible supernatural element *does not take place in space* but is rather *an event of space*” (*Space 2*; emphasis in original).<sup>3</sup>

The difference between the real space and fantastic space in narrative goes back to the notion of referentiality; according to García, this paves the way for the readers to “construct the extratextual space” with the space presented in the literary world so as to construe them as similar to their own Actual World (AW) (“The Fantastic Hole” 6). This seems to fit into Ryan’s principle of minimal departure. However, the fantastic “constructed textual reality” is the intertextual reality that persistently contrasts with the reader’s referential one (“The Fantastic Hole” 6). In other words, the postmodern fantastic use of space “disrupts the reader’s comfortable notion of space as a positivist objective reality” in support of the concept of space as socially deliberated, and as constructed and conventional (García, *Space 7-8*). Through the linkage between space and postmodern fantastic, García proposes four central principles in the construction of human spatiality transgressed: 1) body; 2) boundary; 3) hierarchy; and 4) world. Our study significantly zooms in on the first three principles, since Ryan’s theorization of space is extensively steered towards the fictional world, and García’s thesis seems to move in the same direction.

The first principle, body, generally deals with the space/body/subject triad. García here borrows from two theoretical views. The first one is Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology which is concerned with the perception of reality through the corporeal. In García’s words, “in the experience of reality, physical space is an experience both perceived and constructed by the individual’s corporeal awareness” (*Space 51*). The second one is Martin Heidegger’s existentialist view which stresses the interdependence of “ontology and position... being and being there” (*Space 53*). García holds that “to know that we exist is to know that we have a body that inhabits space—generates space—that we *take place*” (*Space 53*; emphasis in original). The examples García gives for the transgression of body in space are the cannibal spaces, the spaces that devour human beings, or magnetic spaces such as those in Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959).

In the next aspect, the transgressions of the physical “boundary” between spaces transpire when the bounded space is designated through a referential reality in binaries, such as up/down or in/out. In Ryan’s words, physical boundaries are one of the most rudimentary elements in narrative space; they mark “the physically existing

environment in which characters live and move" ("Space" 421). As for the reader, by the time the fictional world is reconstructed, they are accustomed to spot the physical boundaries so as to indicate the referential reality similar to their cognitive map. Without this boundary, García observes, "space becomes an incomprehensible and unattainable 'something' and, in the absence of any referential system of coordinates, the notion of distance and location would have no meaning" ("The Fantastic Hole" 23). Within the fictional storyworld, particularly in the realistic text, the boundaries are constructed by a set of spatial frames, which the fantastic text violates. In Paul Virilio's words, the lack of physical boundaries in postmodern space gives rise to "a world devoid of spatial dimensions, but inscribed in the singular temporality of an instantaneous diffusion" (13). A good example would be the figuration of impossible buildings that have no distinct boundaries between inside and outside, or a house that is bigger inside rather than outside. Another example is the theme of "multiverse" which refers to multiple interconnected realities.

The third principle is the notion of hierarchy in the spatial construction of the textual world. Generally speaking, it refers to the order of the spatial frames wherein everything has been classified logically. A room, for instance, is always a subspace of a house that shows a logical relationship between container and the contained. García mentions Raskolnikov's garret in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) which "is contained within a larger structure (the guesthouse)." She explains that "this garret is at the same time part of a larger frame (the city of St. Petersburg), which also belongs to a broader space, etc." (*Space* 107). Thus, it seems, as García insists, that the transgression of the hierarchal order in a postmodern textual world overlap with notions of metalepsis and metafictionality.

And finally, whenever the categories of body, boundary, and hierarchy come together coincidentally, one encounters the "fantastic hole" ("The Fantastic Hole" 27). The hole, in García's words, is "the fantastic trope which best captures how the changes of corporeal position, architectural boundaries, and spatial hierarchies within the text de-automatize the reader's relationship to space, transgressing the illusion of verisimilitude" (33).

### ***A Lie of the Mind: Fantastic Narrative Space***

*A Lie of the Mind* (1985) is arguably one of Sam Shepard's most complex family plays. In the words of Carol Rosen, it is a "gender journey" (30). Thematically, the play hinges on the problematic relationships between husbands and wives of different generations. Shepard has amplified the effect of this theme by using a particular strategy in the play: the structural pairings of siblings, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives are replicated and intertwined as is time and place, a point underscored by Shepard's adapting of filmic techniques to the dramatic stage, to simulate "parallel

time” (Kane 147). In this play, Shepard depicts the myth of masculinity and, in an interview, mentions that “the women suddenly took on a different light than they had before. Because before it felt so sort of overwhelmed by the confusion about masculinity, about the confusion about how these men identify themselves... But then, when the women characters began to emerge, then something began to make more sense for the men, too” (Rosen 37). Of course, Shepard in *A Lie of the Mind* mocks the concept of love based on the male-dominated power and leans towards a redefinition of “maleness in a way foreign to the neglectful, bullying, domineering, and abandoning fathers” of the play (Rosen 34); it acknowledges the critique of the myth of masculinity. Also, the concern with the past, as is most evident in many of Shepard’s plays, is another main theme in the play. The characters are all obsessed with bitter past memories, like those in *Buried Child* (1978), *Fool for Love* (1983) and *Late Henry Moss* (2000), and find no way to get rid of them.

Like the other families pictured in the plays preceding it, those in *A Lie of the Mind* cannot nurture the children, and the fathers are as usual absent.<sup>4</sup> “Family” as a fundamental community has become as fruitless and sterile as the betrayed American dream of the west. The play also explores the delusions or the “lies of the mind” in the American family that the members tell each other and themselves. Although it seems that the play projects a realistic plot, it does not observe the conventional sense of realism. Reality, as Christopher Bigsby notes, “expands to incorporate fantasy, dream, and myth” (*Modern American Drama* 173). Although this play, as mentioned above, is pregnant with familial issues and can be considered a family play, its experimental aspects provide ample ground for a consideration of “the impossible worlds.”

The action of *A Lie of the Mind* runs as follows: two desperate families are connected by the marriage of one family’s son (Jake) to the daughter of the other (Beth). As the play begins, Beth, brain-damaged from a savage beating by Jake, is being tended to by her parents, Baylor and Meg. Jake sends his brother, Frankie, from California to Montana to see if Beth is dead or alive, but Beth’s father, mistaking Frankie for a poacher, shoots him in the leg and takes him prisoner. Thereafter, the tensions and enmities that motivate the two families grow increasingly disturbing and dangerous. Frankie falls in love with Beth whose brother, Mike, is bitterly determined that she no longer has anything to do with her husband and his family. Meanwhile, on another stage, a hysterical Jake back home in California, is nursed by his possessive mother, Lorraine, and his sister, Sally, to whom Lorraine is openly hostile. Having gotten Jake back from Beth, Lorraine does her best to keep him with her forever. But Jake soon recovers and sets out to have his wife back. In the end, however, he allows Beth to stay with Frankie. Lorraine burns down her house and departs for Ireland with Sally. Jake, left alone, seeks a connection to his dead father

by dispersing his ashes into the moonlight, hoping to find order and meaning in the present by coming to terms with the haunting specters of the past.

One of the two epigraphs to the play by H. L. Mencken in *The American Language* (1919) sketches out America as the AW of the readers and the TAW of the play. It is a public world wherein the readers with reliance on their encyclopedic knowledge of AW construct a fictional encyclopedia on the basis of the possible world of the play. Uniformly, it is the same America as the fictional world (the TAW in this case) in which the individuals' recognizable epistemic quests are—literally and metaphorically—gradually declining and dwindling to vanishing point or “halted” due to their exhaustion:

Most were bankrupt small farmers or down-at-heel city proletarians, and the rest were mainly chronic nomads of the sort who, a century later, roved the country in caricatures of automobiles. If they started for Kentucky or Ohio, they were presently moving on to Indiana or Illinois, and after that, doggedly and irrationally, to even wilder and less hospitable regions. When they halted, it was simply because they had become exhausted. (qtd. in Shepard, *Lie*)

Apart from America as the setting in general, the play explicitly mentions and shows other places as spatial frames, particularly Southern California and Montana. Mexico and Sligo County Connaught (Connacht) in Ireland are also mentioned, though these places are not shown. It is through the principle of minimal departure that the referents of actual place names enter the storyworld with most of their real-world properties: readers with the aid of their cognitive map will imagine Billings in Montana, for instance, in a harsh winter. Since, geographically, the readers sometimes cannot exactly identify the locations in TAW (for instance, where exactly is Billings?), it is appropriate to their mental mapping so as to locate such combinations of real-world and imaginary locations “in unspecified areas of real world geography” (Ryan et al. 20). This description acknowledges one aspect of the play which observes only the realistic conventions in terms of which the reader is led to the referential reality. Conversely, the other aspect of the play is the postmodern fantastic wherein the transgressions occur.

First, we should take note of the truly uncanny set description at the beginning of the play:

Proscenium oriented but with space played out in front of arch. Deep, wide, dark space with a four-foot-wide ramp extreme upstage, suspended about twelve feet high stretching from stage right to stage left... Extreme downstage right (from actor's p. o. v.) is a platform, set about a foot off the

floor, wide enough to accommodate the actors and furniture. The platform continues upstage to about the middle of the stage, then abruptly stops. Center stage is wide open, bare, and left at floor level. The impression should be of infinite space, going off to nowhere... In the first act, there are no walls to define locations—only furniture and props and light in the bare stage. In the second and third act walls are brought in to delineate the locations and the rooms on either side of the stage. Only two walls on each platform, with no ceilings. In the case of the stage-right platform, a wall with a window, extreme stage right. Another wall tying into it, upstage right, running perpendicular to it and with a door in the stage-left side of it. The downstage and stage-left sides of the platform are left open. On the stage-left platform, two more walls set the same way but leaving the downstage and stage-right sides of the platform wide open. An old-style swinging kitchen door is set in the stage-right side of the upstage wall. A window in the stage-left wall. (*Lie*)

This stage direction is generally the constructed architectural reality of the author as an intradiegetic mapping of the storyworld. In the theater, one can consider the stage space as a container of the storyworld with the spatial frames such as the subjects, props, and anything surrounding the stage. The description presents a “heterotopia,” an instance of entirely “other spaces” or extraordinary physical containers (Foucault 25). In the first act, it is stated that “there are no walls to define the locations,” that is, there exist no boundaries on stage to separate the locations. As the play moves forward, the reader/audience spots the hospital in the extreme stage left, and the motel room in the extreme stage right, though they are set in different scenes. Moreover, the road center stage “going off to nowhere” typically suggests the destabilization of the reference. Yet, from another perspective and as an allegorical space, this is about the world as such and not about a concrete location to be plainly perceived by the reader.

David Harvey observes that the Ptolemaic map played a significant role in the Renaissance, since it placed all the countries of the world in a single spatial frame, and by doing this, offered “the globe as knowable totality” (246). As García explains, Ptolemy’s treatment opens up an objective representation in terms of which “space was conceived as containable and conquerable, and what is more important, reality would be something ‘objective’ that all viewers would share” (“The Fantastic Hole” 22). In the stage direction quoted above, the second and the third acts are arranged unusually different. This time the walls as boundaries “are brought in to delineate the locations and the rooms on either side of the stage”; however, Beth’s and her family’s house is located on the stage left in Montana while Jake’s and his family’s house is located in California on the stage right of the theatrical space. In the first place, the “topographical configuration” of the play’s world is quite tangible to construct since the spatial relations here decry the real-world geography (Ryan et al. 21). The play literally refers to two various geographical terrains, but still



metaphorically these are possible worlds that are projected cognitively. As a matter of fact, here one encounters a world like ours but the play uses unrealistic expressive devices to project its possible worlds. To put it differently, figured here is a symbolic space, that is, the play is about a world configured like ours (i.e., California and Montana are far apart) and what is seen on stage is not a faithful image of the storyworld but more like a metaphor or a conflation of actually separate entities. In this case, the reference world is normal, whereas its image is not; the question is: what is the point of the distortion? Alternatively, one could say: the reference world is really like that, it is not a Euclidean geometrical space. Maybe it is a space with more than three dimensions if such a thing can be imagined. Generally, this sort of stage space acts as a postmodern mapping that is considered as a deconstruction of the earlier objective map. In a similar manner, such postmodern mappings are critiques of the usual, known maps as authoritarian claims to truth.<sup>5</sup> The setting of the play symbolizes both the American West and a fluid, gap-ridden consciousness, both the “lay” of the land and the “lie” of the mind (Favorini 219). But, of course, also at issue here is the *lay* of the mind or the mindscape. As a matter of fact, the literal spatial/ontological transgressions depicted in the stage direction map out the characters’ fantasies, their desire to find a way out of the illusions as lies in their minds that have been culturally internalized.

Yet, in another sense, the delimitation of the two states which are a thousand miles apart, the road in between that ends nowhere, and even the stretching of the stage up to the area behind the audience incorporated in one container (the stage), destabilizes logical hierarchical order; that is to say, the contained is much larger than the container. As the first scene starts, the reader/audience, immersed into the narrative universe of the play, sees Jake as if “*standing at a blue payphone on highway*” (*Lie* 1; emphasis in original) and talking to Frankie. But the point is that Frankie is standing right behind the audience talking on the phone to Jake and the long unknown distance between them is shown by the “*impression of huge dark space*” (*Lie* 1; emphasis in original) without any other defined boundary. What goes on here is precisely the removal or transgression of the (ontological) boundaries destabilizing the hierarchical order, which is another word for metalepsis. Jake is located in the fictional location of the play, that is the TAW, and Frankie, as a dislocated body, by stretching of the stage is not only part of that TAW, but also of the AW of the audience, because, standing behind them, they can touch him. Also, when present in the auditorium, one can witness that Jake and Frankie can hear and even see each other during the performance. This enhances the anti-illusionistic or metatheatrical (metafictional) potential of the play.

The second scene is a shift to a hospital where Beth’s voice is almost overlapping Frankie’s last sentence in the previous scene. As for switching to the hospital in this way, in possible worlds theory such shifts are considered to be part of the same global world. Novels also switch setting between chapters, and films between camera takes; however, the characters are able to see each other without any wall

to separate them. Beth, who suffers from a brain disorder called aphasia, sits up in the white hospital bed while her brother Mike struggles to soothe her, but Beth does not recognize him:

MIKE: Do you recognize me? You know who I am?

(BETH stares at him, slowly relaxes her arms, brings them back down to her side. MIKE strokes her back softly.)

BETH: Yore the dog. Yore the dog they send.

MIKE: I'm Mike. I'm your brother. (*Lie 5*)

Beth's inability to recognize Mike puts her identity into question. It seems that Beth as a distinct body is not linked with the stage space as she cannot speak well; her inarticulateness and brain damage make her appear to have a different identity. In a sense, another possible world of her is to be received cognitively by the reader. In other words, she exists and does not exist simultaneously, because on the one hand, in Heidegger's terms, she "dwells" or inhabits the world, but on the other hand, she cannot perceive herself by/in the space she occupies (qtd. in García, "The Fantastic Hole" 19). Beth is trapped between the real and the unreal/imaginary and cannot distinguish between them. According to Lynda Hart, "Beth is not a *real* character in the play; she is a culturally constructed fantasy—a 'lie of the mind'" (79-80). She herself has difficulty recognizing her reality. Hence, it is worth mentioning that, thematically speaking, Beth, as a female, maintains a minor, marginal, and fragile position in such a patriarchal society and this misrecognition due to the mental injury, as the first among other instances in the play, both reflects and feeds into her sense of detachment and non-belonging to her family (her husband, in this case) and society at large. This refusal to act in terms of or conforming to traditional gender roles, whether conscious or unconscious, could be said to mark a kind of ontological transgression on her part. In other words, Beth seems to find in her injury a way out of her plight.

Moreover, the other issue that questions Beth's identity is Jake's narrative as another ontological transgression in the play. In a motel room located just next to the hospital, Jake tells Frankie the reason for hitting Beth to death. He says it all started with a play Beth began to rehearse at home.

... that's right. Just a play. "Pretend." That's what she said. "Just pretend." I know what they were doing!... I know what that acting shit is all about. They try to "believe" they're the person. Right? Try to believe so hard they're the person that they actually think they become the person. (*Lie 9*)

... the character. That's right. They start acting that way in real life. Just like the character. Walkin' around—talkin' that way. You shoulda seen the

way she started to walk and talk. I couldn't believe it. Changed her hair and everything. Put a wig on. Changed her clothes. Everything changed. She was unrecognizable. I didn't know who I was with anymore. (*Lie* 10).

Theoretically, this exemplifies Kendal Walton's concept of "make-believe"<sup>6</sup> in a different context. This is yet another version of identity or displaced body for Beth, one enhancing the idea of performativity: "to pretend and believe so hard" that she is someone else, someone unrecognizable, as if she acts in real life. Also, Jake refers to another play within the current play (defining "the character") and, by doing so, pops the reader/audience out of the fictional world of the play as well as makes them aware that they are watching a play, hence contravening the delimited boundaries and the hierarchal order as the fictionality of the play is interfused with the AW of the audience. As for Jake, he is not able to see the difference between Beth's real life and acting life. To his imagination, all the men who are her partners in a performance are real, and when she changes her appearance for acting, he cannot take it any further. Jake thinks Beth values her job more than her life with him and finally decides that Beth has chosen to be an actress since she has desired to fool around with other men. Thus, he gets mad and beats her so she would come back to the "real world" of the current play.

In his bedroom in California, Jake suddenly sees Beth sitting on the hospital bed. Beth is unaware of this voyeuristic moment, but it is mentioned that she is Jake's vision. Here the relationship between the body and the space is so tight that, even Jake's internal thoughts, or his desire to be with Beth in contravention of the hierarchical order are externalized or concertized fluidly; at issue here is, in Londré's words, a reification between the transitory states of dream and waking that appears to reinforce the dreamlike sense of surrealism (217). By using lights and other visual devices, Shepard attempts to make Beth disappear after some seconds, but the point is that she is really there on a dark stage.

In the second act, "two walls are flown in" (*Lie* 42) and the two houses, Beth's in Montana and Jake's in California, are partially separated and have a rather distinct identity. In another instance, Beth oddly does not recognize the house: "(staring around at space) This—this—this is where I used to be?" (*Lie* 48). At stake here is the body or the subject encountering the perplexity of belonging to a specific space (the house she was born and bred in). The others, such as Meg, Beth's mother, have to remind her of their spatial relations:

BETH: This room was—where we all were—together [?]

MEG: Yes. That's right. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter. We were always here. (*Lie* 48)

In the first scene of the second act, the reader finds Frankie who intends to see Beth in Billings. But Baylor mistakes him for a deer, shoots him in the leg, and now he is kept by Beth and her family. Baylor's misrecognition in this scene belies the aggressive/transgressive aspects of American culture which also characterize family and gender relations. In this part, Baylor's mistake is literally a lie of the mind, one occasioned by hunting—a potent symbol of masculinity—or a crossing of the boundary between man and animal. The next scene entirely deals with Jake, Lorraine, and Sally's conversations on the stage right; that is, while talking to Sally, Jake is able to see the stage left in Montana. This seems to be another transgression of the ontological boundaries in that the literal light, as long as risen on Beth and Frankie, plays a significant role and metaphorically unearths the truth, making it clear for the reader/audience that Beth has fallen in love with Frankie as if he had been her past love:

*JAKE fixes on SALLY as he speaks about her. SALLY's back is toward stage left. Very slowly, as this scene continues, light begins to rise on the stage-left set. A soft pool of light on the sofa where FRANKIE lies on his back with his head Upstage. BETH is kneeling on the floor next to FRANKIE, wrapping the shirt she wore in the first scene around FRANKIE's wounded leg. (Lie 68)*

Subsequently, while staring at the stage left, Jake asks Sally to help him escape: "(With his [Jake] back to SALLY) You gotta help me escape, Sally. I gotta get back there. She's still alive" (Lie 69). "There" in this quotation acts as a cognitive spatial deictic expression for the reader and exactly points to the deictic center, that is, stage left—Billings—where Beth and Frankie are. Moreover, Jake says that Beth is still alive, which is another instance of transgression of boundaries.

The third act of the play functions as a venue for uncovering the truth. In the first scene, the reader copes with the F-universe, another diegetic level or level of fictionality, which is what Sally as a focalizer pictures for her mother. In this sense, within the fictional story of the play, Sally's fiction is a new level of fictionality that projects a new planet in the narrative universe, corresponding to the actual world of the embedded story. Hence, Sally's mind or the act of remembering furnishes the world off stage in Mexico within the current scene. As Kane argues, Sally's memory stands as the only record of the events leading up to her father's death (148). Sally, like May in *Fool for Love*, narrates the story of how Jake, by trying to outrun and then outdrink his father in a Mexican border town years before, evidently caused his father's death in a vehicle pedestrian accident. She says that "we were miles away in Mexico, me and Jake made a special trip [and] we found him in his trailer" (Lie 89). As it happens several times in Shepard's other family plays, here the father "didn't even know who we were at first. Just stood there at the screen door, kinda staring

at us like we might be burglars or something" (89), though he had all the pictures of them taped to the walls. The father is broke, and Jake has actually avenged his father's mistreatment of his mother by drinking heavily and running from one bar to another. Reminiscent of how Oedipus killed his father Laius, on another open roadway, Jake kills his father on the Mexican borderline.

The next scene goes back to Montana where Meg is portrayed in conversation with Baylor and is worried about Beth: "She doesn't act like it anymore. She's like a whole different person... she's disappearing on us. All I recognize anymore is her body. And even that's beginning to change" (*Lie* 99). These constant references to the change in Beth's body and identity emphasize her dis-belonging or lack of relation to the "emotional space" as an intimate place she used to previously belong (Ryan et al. 39). This betokens her ignorance of the masculine and patriarchal authority, one defied for the first time in Shepard's plays by a dominant female voice in *A Lie of the Mind*. Intriguingly, when Beth comes into view, Baylor is not capable of identifying her at first glance, asking Meg "who's this?" (*Lie* 111). What is more, by the end of the scene, another hint of change is given in Beth's conversation with Frankie: "once we're together, the whole world will change. You'll see. We'll be in a whole new world" (114). Supposedly, love will project another possible world for the couple in the future.

Along with the real-world states and towns mentioned in the play, in the stage direction of the third scene there is a description of several travel brochures of real geographical spaces with many foldout colored photographs of European landscapes laid on the bed. We see Lorraine "avidly looking through the brochures and, every once in a while, making notes with a pen in a small dime store notebook beside her" (*Lie* 115). She says "I found it. Here it is. Right here. Sligo County. Connaught" (117), pointing at the big map of Ireland. This, in the first place, is an extradiegetic mapping of the storyworld that is mentioned and also shown only in a brochure and a map located offstage. Ryan has discussed the fusion of language and maps; "narratives," she writes, "use the dual modalities of language and maps, each of these modalities expresses what the other cannot do by itself" (*Narrating Space* 45). In this case, the use of brochure and the map along with the language to describe them convey a better spontaneous mental or cognitive map-made image to the readers. What they would experience is a "disnarrated" storyworld of the future.

In their final appearance on stage, Lorraine and Sally end up setting fire to their house. This time, the shift to stage left transpires in the middle of the current scene. While "fire keeps burning in bucket stage right," Jake appears from deep upstage and Mike from the other side. Mike catches Jake like an animal. Jake acts as a

horse for Mike who takes him downstage center. The peculiar part is that both of them ignore the fire. However, the weirdest scene occurs at the end of the play when Meg “stares across the stage to the fire still burning in the bucket. She moves out into the porch and stares into the space” and says, “looks like a fire in the snow. How could that be?” (*Lie* 131). This is the most extreme kind of transgression in the play, that is to say, one sees the total combination of the states on the stage with no definite boundary, though the walls are still there.

Brian McHale argues that in postmodernist narratives, “space . . . is less constructed than deconstructed . . . or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time” (45). In *A Lie of the Mind*, Shepard attempts to create a new order out of the disorderly, chaotic, and “a decentered vision” on the stage space (Demastes and Heuvel 267). By deconstructing the objective mapping, the play’s postmodern mapping aims to critique the earlier belief in claims of truth, and tries to construct a totally subjective reality or architecture which summons the reader’s mental activity to picture such a reality. Moreover, as a family play, *A Lie of the Mind*, as Carol Rosen observes, zooms in on “the journey from male to female consciousness” that would stand apart from the sexist assumptions or even male chauvinism in American mentality (34). The play’s special focus on space, as an integral part of Shepard’s postmodern theater, throws into high relief the “lies of the mind” which construct “our reality” at individual and cultural levels.

## NOTES

1. See also Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method*, translated by J. E. Lewin, Cambridge UP, 1997.
2. For more on possible worlds theory, see Marie-Laure Ryan's *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory*. Indiana UP, 1991.
3. This is perhaps in line with the definition of postmodernism presented by Brian McHale (1987). McHale considers postmodernism as a shift from epistemological concerns (that are dominant in modernism) such as "What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty? How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?" to ontological ones such as "What is real or what is not real? What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (9-10).
4. Even Baylor's presence is metaphorically thought of as absence, because what he really cares about is hunting, not his family.
5. In this regard, it should be mentioned that the impossibility of creating an accurate and complete map has been noted. Jorge Luis Borges, for instance, in "Partial Magic in the Quixote," contends that a complete map is impossible since if such a map exists, it should include "a map of the map, which should contain a map of the map, and so on to infinity" (196).
6. Kendall Walton's theory of art as "make-believe" (1990), or as pragmatics of pretense, contemplates fictional representations as "continuous with children's game of make-believe." Walton explicates his original metaphor thus:

In order to understand paintings, plays, films, and novels, we must first look at dolls, hobbyhorses, toy trucks and teddy bears . . . Indeed, I advocate regarding the activities [that give representational works of art their point] as games of make-believe themselves, and I shall argue that representational works function as props in such games, as dolls and teddy bears serve as props in children's games. (11)

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