

Two Modern BOOKS on Human Condition and Family Relationships

Ken HARUF and Sam SHEPARD

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Here are two proposals of U.S. modern Writers very insightful regarding human conditions and romantic relationships. The first is Sam Shepard, an American playwright, actor, author, screenwriter, and director, whose body of work spans over half a century. And the second is Kent Haruf who was an American novelist (he died in 2014). All of his novels take place in the fictional town of Holt, in eastern Colorado. Holt is based on Yuma, Colorado, one of Haruf's residences in the early 1980s.

'NOS AMES LA NUIT' (Our Souls at Night) by Kent HARUF, Robert Laffont Editions. Kent Haruf sets all of his books in the fictional small town of Holt and in this book his great subject was the struggle of decency against small-mindedness, and his rare gift was to make sheer decency a moving subject. 'Our Souls at Night,' his final novel, opens with an evening visit that Addie Moore pays to her longtime neighbor, Louis Waters. Not sexual satisfaction, not reward of ambition, not ecstasy, not bliss, just day-to-day happiness. The humblest kind of fulfilment and contentment is written in awareness of human inadequacy and cruelty and the possibility of illness, ruin, death. One false word can make it all incredible, Kent Haruf makes everything very credible. In this book, Addie Moore makes the surprising proposal that they begin sleeping together, without sex, just to talk in the dark and provide the sleep-easing comfort of physical company. The town soon gossips, and Louis's daughter complains, but why should they care ? As the town assumes Addie and Louis are already having sex, the reader is left to wonder: Will they ever ?... (Review by Ruby BIRD & Yasmina BEDDOU)

'A MI-CHEMIN' (Great Dream of Heaven) by Sam Shepard, Robert Laffont Editions. In his second collection of short fiction, 'Great Dream of Heaven,' Sam Shepard offers a resonant examination of interpersonal crisis and revelation in 18 lean tales. These stories often focus on the elusive search for connection and understanding, visiting characters at key moments of consciousness or detachment. The traditional line on Sam Shepard is that he paints turbulent portraits of the untamed American spirit, of characters in motion, driven by a wanderlust bred in the bloodline, either fleeing from their roots or seeking them. Some of the tales explore how characters fail to connect with any greater vision. Ambushed by sex, buried in habit or gripped by a desperation they didn't know they possessed, they become like blind forces of nature, some of them terrifying and heartbreaking.... (Review by Ruby BIRD & Yasmina BEDDOU)

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