

المستخلص

بشرى عبد الكاظم عبد. مفهوم العائلة الاميركية في مسرحيات مختارة ليوجين اونيل ، تينيسي ، وليامز ، وادوارد البي. (رسالة ماجستير)-. بغداد : الجامعة المستنصرية : قسم اللغة الانكليزية ، ٢٠٠٩ .

Modern drama, from the time of Ibsen to the present, has been consistently concerned with family relationships. If we agree that the American family as an institution has undergone profound changes in the past century, we may also observe that those changes have been recorded dramatically on the modern stage.

The history of America coincides with the emergence of the modern family system. This fact is important to the study of American culture. It should not suggest that the American family is unique; rather, the opposite, that in general terms it is part of western history. The American family experience seems to be a more extreme example of the social forces at work in the western world. In America, we can see family responses to these forces in a less inhibited form.

The following study argues that the family situation is a crucial subject in American drama. In American plays, family life embodies an important dilemma, one which reflects the strains of a changing family structure. By looking at how the family is portrayed in American drama, perhaps we can discover a habit of mind, a pattern of values and ideology, which has larger implications. The image of family life, then, may be a revealing point at which social history and literature intersect.

The present study aims at showing the development of the concept of the American family through three generations of modern American dramatists. It concentrates the discussion of this concept in selected plays of

Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee. It is divided into four Chapters and a Conclusion followed by a Bibliography.

Chapter One is divided into two sections. Section One is an introductory idea of the American family. It provides a historical and social perspective of the American family: its emergence, origin and values. Generally, the American family has been affected closely by different aspects of various immigrant families:

cultural, religious, social, and economic. Therefore, the American family formulates a major theme in American drama from its beginnings in the eighteenth century. This is discussed in Section Two, which traces the emergence and the historical development of the concept of the American family in American Drama.

Chapter Two deals with Eugene O'Neill's concept of the American family. O'Neill is the chief dramatist of America, and is regarded as the father of family drama. The Chapter is divided into three Sections. Section One casts light on O'Neill's thoughts, the development of his concept of family and the impact of his family life on his concept. The selected plays for analysis are *Desire Under the Elms*, which is presented in Section Two, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* in Section Three. These plays reveal O'Neill's view of the breakdown of the American family. He asserts the role of the family in one's life and that to break free from the family leads man to loneliness and alienation.

The American playwrights who followed O'Neill are the major artistic and intellectual reactions to O'Neill's achievement. One of them is Tennessee Williams, who is chosen in Chapter Three of this thesis to represent the

American family drama in the 1940s and 1950s. Williams's extensive readings and his wide experience and agony led him to be interested in psychology to analyze family relationships in his plays. The Chapter includes three Sections. The first one follows Williams's stages of life, which formulated his concept of the American family. Section Two gives examples of the family relationships throughout Williams's play, *The Glass Menagerie*. The psychological phase is more shown in the complex family relationships of his play *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Although Edward Albee is known as one of the Absurdist playwrights, he can be regarded as part of the American dramatic tradition. He is chosen in Chapter Four to represent family drama in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, almost all of Albee's plays are portrayals of the American family life, in which he criticizes its

values and relationships. His views and suffering as an adopted son stimulated him to write about family life. Consequently, his circumstances formulated his concept of the family, which is discussed in Section One of Chapter Four. The other two sections discuss Albee's *The American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance*, which are chosen as examples of family relationships in this thesis.

The thesis ends with a Conclusion, which sums up the findings of the study. This is followed by a Bibliography and the Abstract in Arabic.