

Family Values and the Image of Mother in Druten's *I Remember Mama*

Instructor: Latifa Ismaeel Jabboury

The University of Mustansiriyah
College of Arts

Abstract

In many of his plays, the playwright John Van Druten depicts the life of everyday people in everyday situations. Druten is one of the successful American playwrights in 1940s. Actually, Druten was an English playwright and theatre director. He began his career in London, and later moved to America becoming an American citizen. Among his famous plays *Old Acquaintance* (1940), *The Voice of the Turtle* (1943), *I Remember Mama* (1944), *The Mermaid Singing* (1946) and his Critics' Circle Award winning play *I Am a Camera* (1951).

The present paper studies the importance of family values in Druten's play *I Remember Mama* through the image of mother in this play. The paper starts, in the first section, with a brief introduction to realism in modern American drama; it moves gradually to seek the family values in Druten's *I Remember Mama* in the second section. Some family values are very clear in the play specifically the sacrifice and selflessness. Other values are mingled within more technical side of things, and some others are associated with the structure and integrity of the play itself. Druten used these values as the main elements to depict the image of the mother of the Hanson's family.

The paper is rounded up with a conclusion in section three, which states briefly the main findings of the study.

I

Introduction

Any Discussion of family values in American Drama should be joined with a discussion of family drama which was born out of the convention of realism. Although European contemporaries of drama Anton Chekhov and August Strindberg left lasting marks, the father of modern realism is generally considered to be Henrik Ibsen, whose goal was to create an intimate experience and works as true to life as possible with the plays he wrote during the second half of the 19th century, plays such as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* (Zia'ee; 123 & Moss; 45-53).

Realism is a movement concentrated on ordinary middle-class existence and its daily concerns like money, society, and marriage. According to William Harmon, "realists center their attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate, the here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence" (Harmon; 428). As the United States grew rapidly after the Civil War, the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth in industrialism and urbanization, an expanding population base due to immigration, and a relative rise in middle-class affluence provided a fertile literary environment for readers interested in understanding these rapid shifts in culture (Pizer; 4).

Realism became the standard for American drama with the work of Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams in the early 20th century. Later in the century, Arthur Miller, among many others, added their strong voices in family drama (Barnet; 822 & Heiney; 91). Since that time the style of realism had been established to be one of the dominant styles in the American theatre (Cohn; 333).

II

Druten's *I Remember Mama*

John Van Druten uses the style of realism in many of his plays. His plays have to do with everyday people in everyday situations. In these plays he is reflecting realistic pictures of characters. Actually, Druten was an English playwright and theatre director. He began his career in London, and later moved to America becoming an American citizen. Druten is one of the successful playwrights of the 1940s, after the Age of Anxiety. Among his famous plays *Old Acquaintance* (1940), *The Voice of the Turtle* (1943), *I Remember Mama* (1944), *The Mermaid Singing* (1946), and his Critics' Circle Award winning play *I Am a Camera* (1951). Druten was known for his plays of witty and urbane observations of contemporary life and society (Cody; 1417). John Gassner points out that

Van Druten happens to be one of those playwrights who do not evoke lengthy critical ponderings. This is the case because Instead of heaving with the world problems and proffering political or philosophical comment, he has been content to study people and mores, and to set them down for what they are rather than for what they may be worth as symbols. If he has rarely been a robust writer, he has always been an acute observer and a master of civilized dialogue. Since there is never a superabundance of these qualities in the American theatre, America has welcomed him (Gassner; 231).

At a time when post-war anxieties were reflected the insecurity and chaos, Druten was to do an amusing but sober look at serious themes and social issues. He looked backwards at values that he thought were typically American; the values of earnest immigrants grateful for their place in the United States of the early 20th Century. Druten's Broadway play *I Remember Mama* which was ran for 713 performances is about the challenges face a Norwegian immigrant family in San Francisco, living just after the turn of the century in 1910 (Lipsitz; 12 & McConachie; 138).

Despite its old-fashioned title, *I Remember Mama* is a moving portrait of family ties. *I Remember Mama* is written within the frame of realism; it presents the life of Hanson's family as the way life really is. The play contains all the features and elements of realism; it is characterized by forthright, open dialogue and narration. In *I Remember Mama* all the characters and events had been based on the real history of American society at that time (Lipsitz; 13).

I Remember Mama is, actually, based on Kathryn Forbes short story "Mama's Bank Account" (Bordman; 327). Some realistic elements are very clear in the play specifically the dialogue, other elements are mingled within more technical side of things, and some others are associated with the structure and integrity of the story itself. The characters were Norwegian and the narrator stated the fact early in the play. This fact was subtly supported with dialogue that put them in the right time and place, which made them much more realistic (Cullen; 1). The narrator starts:

For as long as I could remember, the house on Steiner Street had been home. Papa and Mama had both been born in Norway, but they came to San Francisco because Mama's sisters were here. All of us were born here; Nels, the oldest and the only boy, my sister Christine, and the little sister, Dagmar. . . . Besides us, there was our boarder, Mr. Hyde. Mr. Hyde was an Englishman who had once been an actor, and Mama was very impressed by his flowery talk and courtly manners. He used to read aloud to us in the evenings. But first and foremost, I remember Mama (*I Remember Mama*; 87).

The technical side of things in *I Remember Mama* is linked with the transition between present and past, associated with the opening scene. Katrin, the play's narrator, has just completed part of her autobiographical novel, and is reading its opening lines aloud to herself. In the midst of reminiscing, Katrin is writing at her desk, and getting called down to supper. As Katrin reminisces about her family life, we see Mama Marta Hanson preparing the weekly budget with the assistance

Family Values and the Image of Mother in Druten's *I Remember Mama* Latifa Ismaeel Jabboury

from her family. Like many immigrants, Mama, Papa and their children stretch their limited money by making tough sacrifices (Cullen; 2). Every Saturday they gather together to apportion Papa's carpentry earnings for the landlord, grocer, and vital needs. In this scene the elder son, Nels, announces his desire to attend high school, so each family member offers to make a financial sacrifice to contribute to the fund of the boy's education.

NELS: Mama, I'll be graduating from grammar school next month.

Could I . . . could I go on to High, do you think?

MAMA: (Pleased) You want to go to High School?

NELS: I'd like to ... if you think I could.

MAMA: Is good. (papa nods approvingly)

NELS: (Awkwardly) It . . . it'll cost a little money. I've got it all written down. (Producing a piece of paper from his pocket) Carfare, clothes, notebooks; things I'll really need. I figured it out with Cy Nichols. He went to High last year. (mama and papa come closer together, to look at the paper he puts before them)

MAMA: Get the Little Bank, Christine. (Christine gets a small box from the dresser)

KATRIN: (From the steps— herself again, in the present looking out front) The Little Bank! That was the most important thing in the whole house. . . .

(Meanwhile, mama has been counting the contents)

NELS: (Anxiously) Is there enough, Mama?

MAMA: The coat I can get another time. But even so

PAPA: I give up tobacco. . . .

CHRISTINE: I'll mind the Maxwell children Friday nights. Katrin can help me. . . .

MAMA: (Triumphantly) Is good! Is enough!

(*I Remember Mama*; 89-90)

The idea of helping each other within the family members is very significant in the play; actually this idea is associated with another kind of family values; that is the idea of sacrificing. When Mr. Hyde, the Hansons' educated but impoverished lodger, reads "*The Tales From Two Cities*" aloud for the Hanson family, all of them are deeply moved by the story especially Katrin. She wrote in her diary that night before she went to bed: "Tonight Mr. Hyde finished *The Tale of Two Cities*. The closing chapters are indeed superb. How beautiful a thing is self-sacrifice; I wish there were someone I could die for" (*I Remember Mama*; 96).

The sacrifice within the family members which had happened first with the fund of Nels' education will occur again later near the end of the play when Mama sacrifices her family heirloom brooch for the sake of Katrin's graduation gift. When Katrin brags to Christine that Mama is

going to buy her the dresser set she has long admired as a graduation present. Her sister tells her Mama is planning to give her their grandmother's brooch as a gift, so Katrin is surprised when she receives the desired dresser set instead. Later, as she is about to leave to perform in the school's production of *The Merchant of Venice*, Katrin is informed that her mother traded with the storekeeper her beloved heirloom for the gift Katrin wanted. She started to cry and said to her father: "But I never meant her to do that... she loved it so much. It was all she had of Grandmother's" (*I Remember Mama*; 116). Distraught by the news, she performs badly in the play, and later presents her mother with the brooch after trading back the dresser set (Lipsitz; 20).

KATRIN: Mama . . . here's your brooch. (She gives it to her)
 I'm sorry I was so bad in the play. I'll go and help Christine with the dishes. (She turns and goes into the pantry)
 MAMA: (Unwrapping the brooch from tissue paper)
 Mr. Schiller give it back to her?
 NELS: We went to his house to get it. He didn't want to. He was planning to give it to his wife for her birthday. But Katrin begged and begged him. She even offered to go and work in his store during her vacation if he'd give it back
 PAPA: (Impressed) So? So!
 MAMA: And what did Mr. Schiller say?
 NELS: He said that wasn't necessary. But he gave her a job all the same. She's going to work for him, afternoons, for three dollars a week.
 MAMA: And the dresser set— she gave that back?
 NELS: Yes. She was awful upset, Mama. It was kinda hard for her to do. She's a good kid.

(*I Remember Mama*; 117)

Katrin Hanson remembers her childhood by relating several incidents revolving around her Norwegian immigrant mother Marta. Little sister Dagmar goes to the hospital for ear surgery. Aunt Trina becomes engaged to the undertaker, Peter Thorkelson. There is a sick cat and troublesome aunts to contend with, along with the feared head of the family, the black Norwegian Uncle Chris Halvorsen. Katrin aspires to be a writer, and her mother helps by seeking advice for her from prominent novelist Florence Dana Moorhead. Through Katrin's narration we learn the basic family setup. A hardworking father isn't in the house much but is quiet and dependable. The only relatives are three disagreeable, nosy aunts and an overbearing uncle who frightens the children with his loud voice. Katrin is labeled "dramatic" (*I Remember Mama*; 118), just as her older brother Nels is typed as "kindly" (*Ibid*; 117). Two younger sisters are appropriately competitive and obsessed with pets. At first glance

there's nothing remotely exceptional about the brood. In Katrin's memory it is Mother who holds everything together, she is the arbiter, the bookkeeper and the judge. She takes personal responsibility for everything and she's the conscience of the family (Lipsitz; 14-19).

When Marta's sister Trina announces she is marrying undertaker Peter Thorkelson, she implores Marta to break the news to their sisters Sigrid and Jenny because she knows very well that Marta can understand her better than the others and she can manage with the other sisters of Trina.

TRINA: Marta, will you . . . will you help me tell the others?

MAMA: Oh . . . Jenny and Sigrid . . . they do not know?

TRINA: No. I was afraid they'd laugh at me. But if you tell them . . .

MAMA: Jenny will not like you tell me first.

TRINA: (Desperately)I can't help that. You've got to tell them not to laugh at me. If they laugh at me, I'll . . . I'll kill myself.

MAMA: (With decision) Jenny and Sigrid will not laugh. I promise you, Trina.

TRINA: Oh, thank you, Marta. And . . . Uncle Chris?

MAMA: (With some seriousness)Ah!

TRINA: Will you talk to him?

MAMA: It is Mr. Thorkelson who must talk to Uncle Chris. Always it is the husband who must talk to the head of the family.

TRINA: Yes. I know, but . . . well, Uncle Chris is so very frightening. He's so big and black, and he shouts so. And Mr. Thorkelson is . . . well, kind of timid, really.

MAMA: (Gently) But, Trina, if he is to be your husband, he must learn not to be timid. You do not want husband should be timid. You are timid. Is not good when both are timid.

(Then firmly)No! Jenny and Sigrid I speak to, but Mr. Thorkelson must go to Uncle Chris.

JENNY: Why did you come to Marta first?

PAPA: She thought Marta would understand.

JENNY: Aren't Sigrid and I married women, too?

(I Remember Mama; 92)

The play is reenacted through Katrin's eyes and from her subjective view. Having become a successful author, largely due to her mother's encouragement, she sets down in writing the everyday incidents and vagaries. In fact, Mama lives in the memory of the children after they have grown up more vividly than she had in her own lifetime. The portrayal of Mama demonstrated a commendable level of emotional and dramatic skill. Utterly consistent in her characterization, she captures the relentless love of family that drives the mother through great hardships with laudable maturity. She is a character who proves true understanding of her immense burden, and adamant spirit (Morreale; 2).

I Remember Mama is actually addressing those lucky enough to experience the affections of a motherly figure. She is more than simply the woman who brought you into this world. A mother is a warming embrace when you are alone, comfort on a bad day, advice in a tough situation. She brings happiness, conquers all obstacles, and triumphs over any foe. It is Mama who represents the axis and the central point of any family (Rapf; 216). When Mama went to the hospital for Dagmar's operation, Katrin said to Christine "The house feels lonesome, doesn't it— without Mama?" (*I Remember Mama*; 110). This specific sentence said by Katrin emphasizes that mama represents the whole family and the house without her seems to be spiritually empty.

The whole play is structured around Katrin's memories of her mother. A kind, yet strong matriarch "Mamma", Marta Hanson goes to great lengths to hold the family together, driving the plot with her seemingly miraculous deeds. Most young children believe that their parents can do anything, yet this is seldom true. However, Marta appears to be an exception. When ambitious young writer Katrin Hanson lacks inspiration for her stories, she turns to her own life, and chronicles tales of her loving mother's unbelievable ability to make the impossible happen for the sake of her family (Gehring; 161).

When the youngest daughter Dagmar is severely ill with mastoid and submitted to an operation her mother Marta is prohibited from seeing her by the hospital staff. But Mama disguised as a member of the housekeeping staff and she sneaks into Dagmar's ward and sings a Norwegian lullaby to her. Later on when a recovered Dagmar returns home and learns her cat "Uncle Elizabeth", is very ill she asked her mother to cure it. Dagmar thinks that Mama can hold and fix everything. Most children think that mother is always the problem-solver (Lamb; 3). When Papa thinks that the cat "Uncle Elizabeth" is dying, Dagmar refuses his words assuring that her mother can make him alive:

DAGMAR: Mama can. Mama can do everything. . . .

Make him live, Mama. Make him well again. Please!

MAMA: We see. Let us see how he gets through the night. And

now, Dagmar, you must go to bed. I bring you your supper.

DAGMAR: But you will fix Uncle Elizabeth? You promise, Mama?

MAMA: I promise I try. Go now.

(*I Remember Mama*; 110)

Next day in the morning the Hanson family was astonished by seeing the cat cured and in good health

DAGMAR: (Overjoyed) He's well. Oh, Mama, I knew you'd fix him.

Family Values and the Image of Mother in Druten's *I Remember Mama* Latifa Ismaeel Jabboury

MAMA: (Appalled) But, Dagmar, I didn't. I . . .
DAGMAR: (Ignoring her)
 I'm going to take him right up and show him to Nels.
 (She rims off back L., calling)
 Nels! Nels! Uncle Elizabeth's well again!
MAMA: (Turning to papa) It's a miracle!
PAPA: (Shrugging)
 You cannot have used enough chloroform. You just give
 him good sleep, and that cures him. We rechristen the
 cat, Lazarus!
MAMA: But, Lars, we must tell her. Is not good to lei with her grow
 up believing I can fix everything!
PAPA: Is best thing in the world for her to believe.
 (He chuckles) Besides, I know exactly how she feels.
 (He lays his hand on hers)

(I Remember Mama; 113)

The play focused on the details of family living even when a crisis comes up. Mother defends the timid Aunt Trina from her cruel sisters, and has to bully Uncle Chris to stop him from antagonizing a generous and kindly doctor. Mama is the center of every problem. She has to pull the family together when little Dagmar needs an operation, and then finds herself stymied by the cold hospital staff when she has been refused visitation rights. There's a great episode where the parents find themselves unprepared to chloroform Dagmar's sick cat. (Rapf, 216).

The use of realism in *I Remember Mama* created a world that was reminiscent of the audience's family. The play is touching, without being too dramatic. It is as warm and comforting as the winter coat Mama always saved for. *I Remember Mama* stresses the importance of family and self-sacrifice in times of economic hardship. The conversation between Mama and Uncle Chris in the hospital clarifies the importance of having a family:

MAMA: We go home. Uncle Chris, you come with us? I make coffee.
UNCLE CHRIS: Pah! Vot good is coffee? I go get drink.
MAMA: (Reprovingly) Uncle Chris!
UNCLE CHRIS: Marta, you are fine voman. Fine. But I go get drink. I get drunk.
MAMA: (Quickly aside to katrin. His leg hurts him.
UNCLE CHRIS: And you do not make excuses for me! I get drunk because I like it.
MAMA: (Conciliating him) Sure, Uncle Chris.
UNCLE CHRIS: (Shouting) I like it!
 (Then, with a change) No, is not true. You know is not true. I do not like to get drunk at all. But I

do not like to come home with you, either.

(Growing slightly maudlin)

You have family. Is fine thing. You do not know

how fine. Katrine, one day when you grow up, may

be you know what a fine thing family is. I haf no

family.....

KATRIN: But, Uncle Chris, Mama's always said you were the head
of the family.

UNCLE CHRIS: Sure. Sure. I am head of the family, but I haf no
family. So I go get drunk. You understand, Marta?

(*I Remember Mama*; 107)

Besides the issue of the family in the play there is the issue of the importance of one's roots. The play may remind you to appreciate where you came from and how far you've arrived. *I Remember Mama* captivated the heart with real, human characters, an undeniably authentic setting, and a clear message; never forget where you came from. One line in the play that is really interesting; it is the question Aunt Jenny posed to Dagmar, regarding her cat Elizabeth: "Don't you know a cat draws breath from a sleeping child?" (*I Remember Mama*; 95) Besides being an interesting line, it serves to give the audience a hint at Aunt Jenny's system of beliefs. This sentence about a superstition immediately reveals her mindset, showing that she comes from "the old country" (*Ibid*; 92), as she still holds on to some of those old-world beliefs (Cullen; 2).

In *I Remember Mama* the Hanson family represents first generation Americans who emigrated from Norway in the early 1900's. Nothing sensational or terribly exciting happens in the lives of these ordinary, working class immigrants. Yet, there is extraordinary poignancy in the way in which the family deals with everyday crises such as the fate of an injured pet cat or the dilemma of a mother who is not allowed to see her child in the hospital. One of the main themes in the play is Katrin's process of growing up through these years. She learns not to take money for granted, what selfishness is, dedication to the family and above all she learns the meaning and importance of family. There is pain for Katrin as she grows up, and the audience feels the pain with her (David; 9).

The play is a narrative strings together a series of events and incidents that define the daily lives of the Hanson family. The Hanson clan revolves around its matriarch, Mama Martha Hanson, who is patient, wise, understanding, and affectionate. Guiding the family safely through the ups and downs of existence, she wrestles with the modest budget, gently prods her easy-going husband, engineers the wedding of a shy dowdy aunt, takes care of her old uncle, encourages her daughter to become a writer, and is patient with a family boarder, who pays no bills

but can read Shakespeare. Mama is meant to be a symbol of all mothers, a stalwart woman steering her brood through all of its problems (Gehring; 161).

The memories that remain a lifetime are not always of world-shattering events. They can be of something as simple as having a chocolate soda with a special person or as unpleasant as an encounter with a bullying aunt. In John Van Druten's drama *I Remember Mama*, these are just two of the incidents that Katrin recalls. Katrin Hanson looks back over the years, picking out the moments that defined her mother's strength and warmth (Morreale; xiii).

In the scene when Katrin and Mama take a walk on the steep San Francisco hills, an ordinary stroll with discussions about coffee and the old country. Each time Mama reveals something about her past to Katrin in this candid conversation, she offers insights into the goals and assimilation issues of many immigrants. Issues like family, not riches, wooed Mama and Papa from Norway. Aunts Trina, Sigrid, and Jenny had settled in San Francisco before they arrived, following Uncle Chris, the head of the Scandinavian American clan, who ranches outside the city. Mama has become an American citizen, and her American-born children speak fluent English, without their elders' foibles or foreign accent (Lamb; 2). The conversation between Katrin and Mama clarifies these points:

KATRIN: Mama, do you ever want to go back to the old country?

MAMA: I like to go back once to look, maybe. To see the
Mountains. . . . But I would be tourist there now.
There is no one I would know any more.
And maybe we see the little house
where Papa and I live when we first marry. . . .

KATRIN: But didn't you come to America to get rich?

MAMA: (Shocked) No. We come to America because they are all
here— all the others. Is good for families to be together.

KATRIN: And did you like it right away?

MAMA: Right away. When we get off the ferry boat and I see
San Francisco and all the family, I say: "Is like Norway,"
only it is better than Norway. And then you are all born
here, and I become American citizen.
But not to get rich

KATRIN: I want to be rich. Rich and famous. I'd buy you your
warm coat.

When are you going to get that coat, Mama?

MAMA: Soon now, maybe— when we pay doctor, and Mr. Hyde
pay his rent. I think now I must ask him. I ask him to-
morrow, after Dagmar comes home.

KATRIN: When I'm rich and famous, I'll buy you lovely cloths.
White satin gowns with long trains to them. And jew-
elry. I'll buy you a pearl necklace.

(*I Remember Mama*; 108-109)

Family can be extraordinarily difficult to cope with, but their love and support are capable of getting one through the day. Druten's *I Remember Mama* is dealing with this philosophy of family. It seems that one of the main ideas Druten wants to deliver through the play is certainly "it's good for family to be together" (Ibid; 108). Led by their Mama, the Hansons experience illness, death, and poverty, but still remain optimistic and hopeful for what's to come. The play is an outstanding presentation of the ultra-realism of the show. The sentimental and nostalgic nature of the play is sincere and realistic. The detail-oriented attention has been given to the technical aspects of the production of the play. Costumes, heavily researched in order to be time-period specific, were a pleasant cavalcade of sensible, believable attire (Smith; 29).

Mama's role in the immigrant family is both traditional and pivotal. She supports, encourages, and makes peace among loved ones, often solving problems with her domestic skills. For example, when she enters the hospital's off-limits, postsurgical recovery ward in which Dagmar is a frightened patient by scrubbing the floors to pass as a maid. She boosts Katrin's writing career by trading a secret homeland recipe for a celebrity writer's advice and referral. Along the way, Mama helps the family adapt Norwegian customs to America. She smoothes the way for her sister Trina and helped her to get married with neither parents nor a dowry. On porches and over cups of coffee, she curbs teasing, snubbing, and bullying behavior as life and traditions change (Lipsitz; 15).

I Remember Mama utilizes an intimate narrative structure of realism to frame the immigrant story. Marta learns Uncle Chris is near death, so she takes Katrin with her to say goodbye. When Jenny refused to go with them her sister Sigrid says: "he's dying now, and blood is thicker than water. Especially when it's Norwegian" (*I Remember Mama*; 119). The former statement assures the significance of the both issues; the issue of the importance of family values and the issue of never forgetting the root you belong to (Cullen; 2).

When Katrin was dejected because she receives her tenth literary rejection letter Marta takes some of her stories to famed author Florence Dana Moorhead and convinces her to read them. Marta returns home and advises her daughter that Moorhead feels the girl has talent and should write about what she knows best. Marta urges Katrin to write a story

about Papa. When the girl's story is accepted for publication, she is overjoyed to be paid five hundred dollars. After announcing some of the money will go towards the purchase of the winter coat Marta always has wanted, Katrin confesses her story is not about her father but is titled "Mama and the Hospital" (*I Remember Mama*; 129).

The play reflects a realistic world for the characters to develop in. The Hanson's family struggle through illness, loss, and financial troubles. Mama's struggle to care for her family is all real. The realism is also reflected in the pure magic in the play's evocation of ordinary life. Mama helps Katrin getting started as a writer, and Katrin's coming of age is symbolized by the ritual of granting her first cup of coffee. Moreover, Mama is forced to confess that there is no bank account. She had lied because "It is not good for little ones to be afraid. . . to not feel secure" (*I Remember Mama*; 128). But now she thinks it is time to tell. "The audience realizes that Mama's real bank account is the love and caring between the members of her family and the values she has instilled in them" (Rapf; 216).

I Remember Mama relies heavily on the use of flashbacks as a storytelling device, and since it is the integral and frequent part of the play, the transitions between the primary and secondary timelines should be as smooth and visually appealing as possible. The play has a circular structure, ending in a similar fashion to the way it began (Cullen; 1).

III

Conclusion

I Remember Mama offers an amiable portrayal of early twentieth century Norwegian immigrants, revealing their daily challenges, lighthearted moments, and career aspirations. The family is guided by a foreign-born matriarch who embraces America as she resolves problems with simple wisdom. The Hanson family works together to manage health care and education on a tight budget and deal with problems arising from marriage, illness, eccentric relatives, and a penniless boarder.

One of the themes of this play is the nature of selfishness and unselfishness. In the opening scene, one sees how unselfish the family members are with one another as they all try to figure out a way that Nels can afford to go to high school.

Druten employs the elements of realism as instruments to convey the family values in the play. Moreover, the characters are all real specially Mama, who spreads the emotional and spiritual strength that is at the heart of American family in 1940s, she is a real character of her time. In *I*

remember Mama Druten portrays a real picture of the significance of the family values through many images.

I remember Mama is one of the most emotional touching plays. The story is compelling and the characters are very real. Their problems, hardships and triumphs are very convincing. The audience is drawn into their world from the first moment. Mama, for instance, is very hardworking, dedicated and loving. She tries her best to keep her family happy and functioning despite their difficult financial situation. Other characters are just as interesting for their various reasons. The play shows the world from a different view and it really exhibits the significance of the family values and the importance of Love inside the family.

The family is uniquely welded together by ties of affection. The play is meant to represent the struggles and vicissitudes which beset, and also enliven, immigrant life in America as a melting pot and upwardly mobile society that cherishes hard work and honesty. While the older generation clings to its customs and habits of speech, the children are quickly assimilated. The story of the play is told in flashbacks by the daughter Katrin who serves as the observer-commentator in depicting a series of domestic crises.

References

- Barnet, Berman & Burto eds. 1989. "Realism" p.826 & "Naturalism" p. 822 in *Types of DRAMA Plays and Essays*. Glenview, USA: library of Congress Cataloging-in Publication Data, Scott, Foresman and Company, Illinois / Boston / London, Fifth Edition.
- Bordman, Gerald Martin & Hirschak, Thomas S. eds. 2004. "*I Remember Mama*" in *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre*. Foreword by Harold Prince, third edition, p. 327, Oxford University Press US.
- Cody, Gabrielle H. & Sprinchorn, Evert Eds. 2007. "John Van Druten" in *The Colombia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*. Volume 2; p. 1417, Colombia university Press.
- Cohn, Ruby & Dukore, Bernard eds. 1966. *Twentieth Century Drama: England, Irland, The United States*. Queens College of The City University of New York. Random House Inc. / New York.
- Cullen, Lucas. 2012. "*I Remember Mama*, and Lucas Cullen's short film, *Fortune*"; Nov 15th, in "Mustang" Sallie Gardner: A Stevenson Film Blog. 2 pages internet Available <<http://dinafiasconaro.sufilmvideo.org/2012/11/15/i-remember-mama-and-lucas-cullens-short-film-fortune/>>
- David, M. Agnes. 1961. *Modern American Drama*. The Macmillan Company Ltd.
- Druten, John Van. 1947. "I Remember Mama", in *Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre*. pp. 85-129. Second Series edited with an introduction by John Gassner. Crown Publishers; New York. All the quotations from the Play, used in this paper, refer to this edition.
- Gassner, John. ed. 1947. *Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre*. Second Series edited with an introduction by John Gassner. Crown Publishers, New York.

Family Values and the Image of Mother in Druten's I Remember Mama Latifa Ismaeel Jabboury

- Gehring, Wes D. 2003. *Irene Dunne: First Lady of Hollywood*. Published in the U.S.A. by Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Harmon, William & Holman, Hugh. 1986. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York, Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Heiney, Donald & Downs, Lenthil H. 1973. *Recent American Literature To 1930*. Barron's Educational Series, INC. Woodbury, New York.
- Lamb, Wendy Alison. 2010. "I Remember Mama" in *Encyclopedia of American Immigration*. Ed. Carl L. Bankston III, Tulane University. March 3 volumes. Internet available: <http://salempress.com/Store/samples/american_immigration/american_immigration_mama.htm>
- Lipsitz, George. 2003. "Why Remember Mama? The Changing Face of a Woman's Narrative", p.7-24 in *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*. By ed. Joanne Morreale. Syracuse University Press, New York.
- McConachie, Bruce. 2003. *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment 1947-1962*. Studies in theatre history & culture. Edited by Thomas Postlewait. University of Iowa Press.
- Morreale, Joanne ed. 2003. "Introduction" in *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*. Syracuse University Press, New York.
- Moss, Walter G. 2010. "The Moscow Art Theater" 21-29 & "Literature, Realism, Comedy, and Tragedy" 45-53 in *The Wisdom of Anton Chekhov*. Copyright by Walter G. Moss. Internet modified 26 November. 74pages. Online, internet available <URL:Home Page:<http://www.chekhovEssay.htm>>
- Pizer, Donald. 1995. *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Rapf, Joanna. 2006. "1948 - Movies and the Family" in *American Cinema of the 1940s: Themes and Variations*. Edited by Wheeler Winston Dixon. The State University, by Rutgers.
- Smith, Judith E. 2004. *Visions of Belonging. Family stories, popular culture, and postwar democracy, 1940-1960*. New York Chichester, West Sussex, Columbia University Press.
- Zia'ee, Mehdi & Shamsa'ee, Ali Haji. 2005. *A Critical Guide to Great Plays*. Omid Mehr Publication.

القيم الأسرية وصورة الأم في مسرحية دروتين "أتذكر ماما"

ملخص البحث

في العديد من مسرحياته يقوم الكاتب المسرحي جون فان دروتين بتصوير حياة الناس في مواقفهم اليومية. ويعد دروتين واحدا من كتاب المسرح الأمريكي الناجحين في أربعينيات القرن العشرين. في الحقيقة كان دروتين كاتباً ومخرجاً مسرحياً إنكليزياً. بدأ بمزاولة مهنته في لندن ومن ثم انتقل للعيش في أمريكا وأصبح مواطناً أمريكياً. ومن بين مسرحياته الشهيرة: معرفة قديمة 1940 وصوت السلحفاة 1943 وأتذكر ماما 1944 وغناء الحورية 1946 والمسرحية الحائزة على جائزة "دائرة النقد" أنا كامرا 1951.

يقوم البحث الحالي بدراسة القيم الأسرية وأهميتها في مسرحية دروتين "أتذكر ماما" وذلك من خلال صورة الأم في هذه المسرحية. ويستهل الدراسة في المبحث الأول مقدمة عن الواقعية في المسرح الأمريكي الحديث، ومن ثم ينتقل البحث تدريجياً في استقصاء القيم الأسرية في مسرحية دروتين "أتذكر ماما" وهذا في المبحث الثاني. إن بعض القيم الأسرية واضحة في المسرحية وتحديدًا التضحية والأيتام. أما القيم الأخرى فإنها أكثر امتزاجاً داخل الجانب التقني للأشياء. وبعض القيم الأخرى فإنها ترتبط مع هيكل ولحمة المسرحية ذاتها. حيث يستخدم دروتين تلك القيم كعناصر رئيسية لتصوير شخصية الأم لدى عائلة هانسون.

وينتهي البحث بخاتمة في المبحث الثالث تذكر بإيجاز الاستنتاجات الرئيسية للدراسة.