**Trouble in Paradise, the cultural forces that make and break the United States: The study of the theory of American Exceptionalism in Sam Shepard’s True West**

**Athena Azimi1; Atiyeh Razavi Hashjin**

*1 MA in English Language and Literature, Ferdwosi University of Mashhad;Azimi.Athena@gmail.com*

*2 MA in Linguistics-Teaching Persian to Non-Natives, Imam Reza International University; Email: Atiyeh.razavi@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

This study intends to analyse True West by Sam Shepard which is classified as a part of his family plays trilogy. It is crucial and vital to pinpoint the forces that have shaped the American people’s psyche and culture, therefore, the play should be read in the light of American Exceptionalism. This play shows the downfall of the American dream and the Myth of the frontier which have acted and still to some extent act as the American metanarratives. However, it is apparent from the characters and from the sad conditions of their lives that these narratives have confused the characters since they cannot embody the idealizations they propose and therefore, believe to be ineffectual people. The characters are mostly hurt when their identity seems to be in opposition to the normative identity dictated by the different forces and myths in the United States. Therefore, as the play is set in a nucleus of society, the family, this study by illustrating the polarization and conflict among characters in the play arrives at the inner conflicts of the characters in forming an identity.

**Keywords:** *True West, Shepard’s Family plays, American Exceptionalism, Myth of the Frontier, American dream, Metanarratives.*