Chapter V

Conclusion

An examination of Eugene O’Neill’s plays in the foregone chapters leads us to certain conclusions regarding the development of O’Neill’s concept of men and women through an analysis of their plots, situations, characters, dialogues and techniques. It may be affirmed that O’Neill is mainly concerned with the sociological, cultural, and personal isolation of the individuals who are estranged from one another, and communication and mutual understanding in their lives are replaced by estrangement and hostility. His plays reveal the social life where one individual looks upon the other as a hostile force. There comes a state when he becomes isolated and estranged not only from others but also from himself.

O’Neill, being an existentialist, deals with life in a very realistic and authentic manner, and presents a faithful dramatization of human situation. The most important issue of the contemporary American society is man’s failure to “belong” or to find roots anywhere in this hostile world. Man is isolated not only from himself but also from nature, culture, society, religion and God. He is a lost and lonely soul, and suffers from a sense of anguish as is already evinced through the isolated protagonists in The Iceman Cometh, Long Day’s Journey into Night, A Touch of the Poet and A Moon for the Misbegotten as well as the characters in the other plays under this study. This sense of isolation and loneliness of the characters in his plays arises out of the American socio-cultural and spiritual milieu. Man’s desire to belong is shown in Mourning Becomes Electra and in it we find the utter lack of any sustaining faith in the present time.

The sense of isolation and loneliness in the plays of O’Neill causes suffering to his characters, and their failure to control it in an effective manner brings tragedy in
their lives. This isolation and loneliness may originate from a painful sense of separation from those with whom one has a striking intellectual or spiritual affinity. It looks ironical when one feels a total stranger in the very place where he intensely wants to live with a sense of belongingness. An isolated person in his plays is one whom circumstances have forced into a self-recognition of separateness, resulting in his suffering. *The Iceman Cometh* shows how man’s inability to cope with life can create a feeling of isolation and loneliness; in his life, forcing him to withdraw from others. The play effectively dramatizes the alienation and sufferings of the inhabitants of Harry Hope’s Saloon who have long broken their links with outside world and are living in a world of their own making. *The Iceman Cometh* also indicates how the destructive power of the romantic ideal stands in the way of man’s forming a meaningful relationship with the real world, and how finally, it is the cause of isolation and loneliness in his life. The same is true of the life of Dion Anthony of *The Great God Brown* and Simon Harford of *A Touch of the Poet*. Having failed in their search for romantic ideal, both of them are isolated from reality. In *Long Day’s Journey Night*, Edmund Tyrone’s quest for beauty in a world of dreams is the principal cause of his estranged life.

Thus, in O’Neill’s plays man’s over-reaching craving for possessiveness and material gains is one of the vital causes of his isolation and loneliness. How the commercial civilization has made man spiritually bankrupt is given its finest expression through the characters of Ephraim Cabot in *Desire Under the Elms* and Billy Brown in *The Great God Brown*. Ephraim Cabot suffers from a sense of isolation due to his excessive materialistic attitude. His thirst for money keeps him apart and separated from his sons and wives. Similarly, Billy Brown exemplifies the successful but empty life of the materialist. He is inwardly empty and devoted only to
the exterior things of life. *The Great God Brown* shows the isolation deeply rooted in American culture. It exposes those who seek money at the cost of truth and beauty, and remain severed from others and also from themselves. O’Neill always considers the acquisitive man as the root-cause of all the modern maladies. His is a voice against the craze of material success. To him, a money-minded person is quite complacent and steeped only in material values which cause his personal isolation and suffering. The isolation of James Tyrone and Phil Hogan from their families in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, respectively, is the cause of their excessive materialistic attitude.

O’Neill’s characters suffer from isolation and loneliness also when they try to possess any human being by playing nasty tricks. This kind of possessiveness arises out of insecurity, and becomes the cause of their isolation. These pushes Prof. Leeds of *Strange Interlude* to remain isolated from his daughter, Nina, when he tries to keep her as a possession for his security. Lavinia Mannon of *Mourning Becomes Electra* faces the same problem when she tries to possess her brother, Orin, for her security. Another character who becomes a victim of loneliness and isolation owing to this kind of possessiveness is Nina Leeds of *Strange Interlude*. She turns to be an alienated figure when she tries to possess all her desired men.

In the way of possessing others, the possessor sometimes becomes a possession and remains isolated forever. The case in point is the tragic suffering and isolation of Abbie in *Desire Under the Elms* who tries to trap and possess Eben for the sake of her materialistic fulfillment, but becomes herself a possession of Eben. The suffering of Josie Hogan in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is something parallel to that of Abbie. She is trapped by Jamie’s selfless love when she tries to possess him, and finally remains isolated from him. Similarly, in *Strange Interlude*, Ned Darrell is
forced to lead an isolated and lonely life of suffering when separated from his beloved and son after being trapped by the power of love. Also, it happens in the case of Christine Mannon and Adam Brant in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Both the characters are trapped in the course possessing others, and remain isolated and lonely to face their doom. The possessiveness in Brant arises out of revenge, and Christine’s is the result of her insecurity. But both are the victims of isolation and loneliness.

People in O’Neill’s plays suffer from isolation and loneliness also owing to their false pride and ego. In *A Touch of the Poet*, Con Melody’s false aristocracy is the source of his tragic suffering and isolation. He lives entirely in his memories of earlier gallantry in love and war. He always considers himself as the Major Cornelius Melody. In his pretensions of aristocracy, he hates his low-born wife and worships a high-bred mare, and thus remains lonely and isolated from the realities of life. In *Desire Under the Elms*, Ephraim’s egotistical nature stands on his way, and his failure to adjust himself to new situations always plunges him into ever-increasing loneliness.

Another significant cause of man’s isolation and loneliness is the search for the lost mother’s love. It is an important aspect of O’Neill’s plays. There is a profound love of a man for the lost mother, and it is symbol of lost happiness. Having failed to attain it, man remains isolated throughout his life. In *The Great God Brown*, Dion cries to be buried with his mother; and in *Desire Under the Elms*, Eben fails to forget his dead mother, who has been haunting his subconscious mind since the day of her death. In *Strange Interlude*, Charles Marsden suffers from isolation after the death of his mother. The suffering of Orin Mannon in *Mourning Becomes Electro* and Jamie in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is the result of the search for lost mother’s love. These characters suffer from isolation and loneliness after losing the love of their mothers. But in the case of Don Parritt of *The Iceman Cometh*, the search is something
different. In it, O’Neill is preoccupied with the dual aspect of the ‘mother-archetype’— both the giver and the destroyer of life. Orin tries to regain it through Lavinia. Jamie desperately wants to get in the arms of Josie, and Dion helplessly seeks it through Cybel, but none of them are able to recover it completely. Thus, they are forced to lead an estranged life, devoid of the love of a mother.

We find the sufferings of an individual in the plays of O’Neill through his isolation from ‘self.’ The characters in his plays are isolated and feel lonely due to their false pretensions and racial complex. In *A Touch of the Poet*, Con Melody is alienated from his self after rejecting his own Irish Origin. Jones in *The Emperor Jones* is a victim of self-alienation by hating the Negroes to whom he really belongs. The characters in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* also suffer from self-alienation. Each of them is lost and is in struggle with him. Marry is isolated from self and is engaged in her past. Jamie’s struggle is with himself. He has punished himself by taking wine and indulging in sex. Edmund’s self-alienation is the result of his romantic outlook, his desire to identify with Nature.

Isolation in the plays of Eugene O’Neill is shown through the love-hate relationship among the characters. We find it in the case of Evelyn and Hickey in *The Iceman Cometh*. It again happens in the case of Nora and Con in *A Touch of The Poet*. Both the wives are isolated from their husbands owing to this type of relationship. It occurs not only between wife and husband; we witness it also in father-son, mother-son, and father-daughter relationships. In *Long Day’s Journey into Night* James Tyrone’s love-hate relationship with his sons is the cause of his estrangement. We observe that the same relationship exists between Mary and Jamie, and between Edmund and Jamie. In *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, both Josie and Phil are the victims of isolation and loneliness due to the love-hate relationship.
In O’Neill’s opinion, man is a lonely sufferer in this helpless world. He finds himself totally isolated in a spiritually sterile universe and, therefore, cannot have a sense of harmony in it. In his search for identity, and also his need to belong, he feels his lostness more intensely. All the protagonists of his plays feel isolated, alienated, and despairing for lack of the centre of belonging. The tension in his plays is commonly related with the struggle against isolation and loneliness. We learn from his works that a man has to face tough times in a world without God, love and faith in life, and that he may belong, but it is possible only after sacrificing his life. It happens in the case of Yank, Robert Mayo and Orin Mannon.

Finally, O’Neill’s concept of men reveals that the theme of isolation and loneliness is one of the variations on a common theme in American drama, i.e., the theme of ‘Quest’ to which all the major playwrights are engaged in some form or the other. In the plays of Eugene O’Neill, however, this theme has been raised almost to a ‘cult’, a ‘force’ in human affairs that seems to dominate all the other aspects of life. Almost every one of the major characters displays a dream or a craving for the ideal that is outside his actual life. In most cases, the revealed situation is ironical. Fate and circumstances always so conspire against the dreamer that the dream not only becomes impossible but also a source of suffering and tragedy.

The work characteristically evinces that the treatment of isolation and loneliness in O’Neill’s plays changes from the early to the later plays when his outlook on life grows more pessimistic and negative. In the early plays, isolation and loneliness are caused by the vague and romantic dreams of the characters, who finally meet with the failure of unfulfillment of these dreams. In the later plays, O’Neill deals with that aspect of the dream of his characters which, with its rare flashes of revelation, keeps the dream alive and worth-pursuing. The character experiences a
submerging of self into the universal whole in a mystical fashion. The character for a moment has a saint’s vision of beatitude, as Edmund says in _Long Day’s Journey into Night_: “For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on towards nowhere.” This is the kind of ‘isolation’ we find in the later phase of O’Neill’s literary career. We see here that isolation and loneliness make man spiritually shattered, and not only physically as in the early plays. Here, man feels isolated and lonely because his life is split between the dark reality and his sick existence on the one hand, and the eternal beauty of a permanent dream of mystical kind on the other. The dream merges into a mystical-spiritual experience and reveals the larger mystery of the universe itself. O’Neill comes to the realization that the quest for illusion or dream is meaningless and that only recognition of the eternal unity manifest in God can bring comfort to the isolated, lonely and split soul of man.

O’Neill’s plays took for the study of concept of men dealt with isolation and loneliness are caused by the defeat or failure of the ideals, illusion and romantic dreams in actual life. The tensions in O’Neill’s plays are nearly always connected with man’s struggle against isolation and loneliness. The secret of his dramatic intensity is to be found not in his theatricality, but in his rebellion and anger, and in his inability to resign himself to an arid view and way of life. He could not be at ease in a world without God, love and trust in life. His plays make it certain that he is the dramatist of failure, estrangement and isolation all through his illustrious literary career.

In essence, Eugene O’Neill was a dramatist haunted by the need to express man’s struggle to find positive meaning in life—to reach beyond the realm of his instinctive needs in order to create, to possess, to will his own future. Opposing man’s
desire to find individual meaning in life is what O’Neill calls the Life Force—the subconsciously procreative powers in man that draws him away from his personal ambition and bids him fulfill his role in nature.

One of the major devices which O’Neill used to dramatize man’s struggle with the Life Force is the man versus woman conflict. Since this conflict is present in most of O’Neill’s work, the nature of his treatment of women necessarily play a vital role in the interpretation of O’Neill’s ever-changing attitude toward man’s struggle in life. It has been the another concept of this paper that woman represents the Life Force to O’Neill and that O’Neill’s concept of women as the Life Force shows a definite pattern of development. This study thus traces the development of O’Neill’s concept of woman and emphasizes the various significant stages in woman’s growth which reflect O’Neill’s attitude toward man’s tragic struggle to find happiness in life.

In order to establish the concept of women, six of O’Neill’s plays have been examined chronologically, and from this examination, several specific woman character types have been analyzed. From this analysis it is clearly evident that as O’Neill’s philosophical outlook toward life becomes increasingly pessimistic, woman, as the Life Force in his plays, becomes stronger and more complex. Man’s desire to reach an ideal is replaced by his need to find love, while woman, who in the early plays represents love, becomes masculine in her desire for individuality. In the later plays the struggle between man and women takes the form of the Father versus Mother conflict. The Mother in the early plays is weak and submissive. But as she finds it increasingly different to satisfy man’s ideal of her, she begins to seek her own individuality. From this point to the end of O’Neill’s work, O’Neill constantly seeks a satisfactory concept of women. The characteristics found in the submissive Mother are used to create two new female types—the Earth Mother, who retains the
submissive feminine characteristics of the Mother, and the Seductress, who takes on the masculine desire for power. In the later plays, both the Earth Mother and Seductress become dominating characters, each as powerful a destroyer as the other; for both seek complete masculine submission to their desire but at the same time are completely incapable of offering fulfillment or selfless love.

The full impact of the growth of woman from a passive symbol of motherhood to a power destructive force is most clearly realized when the finding of each individual play are looked upon as component parts of the development of O’Neill’s whole concept of woman.

As has been stated, it seems clear that, initially, O’Neill conceived of woman in the role of Mother, either as a natural mother or as the wife-mother. In this role woman’s significance lay in her presence in the play as a symbol of protection and of refuge for the protagonist. Robert Mayo in the Beyond the Horizon is drawn to Ruth Atkins as the sexual fulfillment of his love for Mrs. Mayo, with whom O’Neill clearly identifies him in contrast to the earthy, realistic Mr. Mayo. Rob forsake his romantic dream to sail beyond the horizon because of his love for Ruth, only to find that mother love, when transferred to the wife-mother, has lost its protective quality. Ruth seeks in rob the same feeling of security that he seeks in her, and failing to find it, Ruth’s love turns first to hatred and then to apathy. Rob thus fails to find in love either the fulfillment of his romantic ideals or the peace and protection promised in Ruth as the symbol of love. Also we find that too much mechanization of modern life is also one of the important factors responsible to generate the sense of isolation, loneliness, estrangement and insecurity in the life of an individual. It has de-stabilized human life. Besides the impersonal and mechanical social order, another factor responsible for the feeling of isolation and loneliness in O’Neill’s heroes is their failure to
discriminate between the world of dream and that of reality. His characters are the willing victims of romantic dreams or illusions; they suffer and feel isolated because of their refusal to give up their dreams. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Robert’s romantic dream of going beyond the horizon is pushed beyond his pragmatic bent of mind.

The creation of the character of Anna in *Anna Christie* suggests O’Neill’s growing awareness of the complexity of woman’s role in man’s struggle with Fate. In *Anna Christie* O’Neill reaffirms his belief that woman is universally the symbol of love. However, only certain types of woman are capable of offering the comfort and peace man seeks in love. Anna is the first Earth Mother. She is the combination of Mother with the primitive Earth Goddess, and in O’Neill’s plays, she is the Divine Harlot. No longer is O’Neill satisfied with the purely platonic love of the Mother, for she is incapable of understanding man’s sufferings—she does not have the experience of pain and consequent wisdom of life that man needs for understanding. Anna’s background as a prostitute enables her to see life as it is, and when she finds love, it is a more profound and selfless love than that of the Mother and the Wife-Mother. From this play throughout the rest of his works, O’Neill’s virtuous woman are treated with contempt, and the Earth Goddess, Cybele, whose entrance Anna foreshadows, appears in contrast to the selfish, possessive Wife-Mother as the wise friend and comforter to the tormented protagonist. Anna is, perhaps, O’Neill’s most noble heroine. In her frank honesty she forces Mat Burke to accept her love on its own merits. Through his need for her, Mat is willing to challenge Fate, and although O’Neill assures the audience that the sea waits to claims its own, Anna is determined not to yield without a struggle.

The woman character types are developed in *Welded* from the character of Anna, and these types mark the beginning of the growth in O’Neill’s concept of
woman. The first type is embodied in the character of Eleanor Cape. Eleanor differs from earlier woman characters in several ways. She is no longer the simple, ignorant creature represented in Ruth and Eileen, who depend upon love as their whole purpose in living. Furthermore, like Anna, Eleanor no longer passively accepts masculine domination. She recognises her need for love, but she recognizes also its limitations, and she is determined to sustain her own individuality. The strength of Eleanor’s personality anticipates the future destructiveness of the eternal girl - woman type as manifested finally in *The Great God Brown* in the character of Margaret Anthony. Eleanor is the first Seductress. She still maintains the possessive characteristics of the Mother which compel man to her, while selfishly desiring her own satisfaction in the marital relationship. Whereas Anna’s challenge of man is the plea for mature fulfillment, Eleanor’s challenge is an egocentric determination to maintain her own individuality. Because of this, O’Neill felt the Seductress incapable of sacrificing self in order to assist man in coping with the frustrations of his own quest for expression. Thus, O’Neill created the second type--“woman,” the prostitute. Woman’s acceptance of the pain and suffering in life gives Michael Cape the solace he needs to return to his struggle to find love with Eleanor. Woman is the abstract symbol of the pagan earthiness so sympathetically portrayed in Anna. Whereas O’Neill found it necessary to avow Anna’s essential purity, in woman he for the first time no longer purports sexual purity to be a quality of goodness. On the contrary, the pagan promiscuity of woman is enhanced and magnified in his later woman as the only saving quality of femininity. The masculine challenging personality of Eleanor he later develops as the Destroyer. The separation of woman into two distinct types shows O’Neill’s growing awareness of the potential power of woman in guiding man’s destiny. It also reveals his need to create, even abstractly, a female type whose
only purpose in life is to love, as opposed to the masculine modern woman, who cannot integrate her need to possess with her need to love. Also, The Great God Brown shows how a man’s persistent efforts to belong to Nature are thwarted by materialism, Christian asceticism, and socially-caused conflict in psyche.

In Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill’s two female types converge, yet remain separate, in the character of Abbie. In Abbie, the Seductress nature of Eleanor vies with the pagan nature of the Earth Mother, resulting in the appalling sensuality of the incestuous Mother. This conflict within Abbie’s own personality is intensified by O’Neill’s thematic conflict of the Puritanical Father with his pagan lust for the Mother, whom he rightly identifies with nature. The sterility of Ephraim’s union with Abbie reflects O’Neill’s concept of the union with death in the suppression of love, symbolized in the spirit of Eben’s dead mother. When Abbie sublimes her desire to win Eben’s love, she conquers to some extent the Seductress traits within her. Still, it is her willingness to fulfill Eben’s need for the Mother as well as to satisfy his sexual needs that transforms her into the Earth mother. Abbie stands alone among O’Neill’s women as the complete woman, for she is all things to Eben—mother-mistress-wife. Shameless in her desire, victorious in her defeat of the God of stones, Abbie is unique among O’Neill’s women as the virile positive force that gives the protagonist courage to love. It is also significant to note here that in this pagan play, with all its Freudian implications, O’Neill’s increasing pessimism about the romantic quest is transferred from the natural instinct to love to the suppressive Puritanism symbolized in the Father. That is, whereas O’Neill had heretofore created woman as the force in opposition to man’s idealistic quest, in Desire Under the Elms man finds it only through surrender to love, and man in the character of the Father represents death-in-life through a denial of the natural creativity of the pagan Mother.
Woman as the pagan Earth Mother in *Desire Under the Elms* meets man’s needs both sexually and spiritually primarily because the primitive and natural environment in which the play is set enables these characters to react according to their instincts. However, modern man must suppress his inner needs in order to adjust to the hypocrisy of civilization. In *The Great God Brown* O’Neill illustrates what happens to man when society impose its restrictions upon his pagan nature. Moreover, the girl-Seductress in the character of Margaret is the decadent product of modern civilization that finally destroys the inner man. The development of the girl-Seductress into a destructive force completes the second state of O’Neill’s ever-growing fear of feminine power. It may be recalled that in *Welded* O’Neill introduced two character types. In *Desire Under the Elms* he developed the abstract Divine Harlot, Woman into the living pagan Abbie. Margaret in *The Great God Brown* shows the contrasting development of the mistress-wife introduced in *Welded* in the creature of Eleanor. Margaret is devoid of all understanding of the conflict raging within her artist husband, Dion Anthony. Dion accepts her barrenness, marries her, and then wears his mask of Pan for her even though it means his own inner destruction. Finally, Dion’s spiritual purity and love are suffocated by the mask, which he wills to Billy Brown, the masculine embodiment of the mediocrity of modern man. Billy’s love for Margaret compels him, too, to wear Dion’s mask in order to take his place as Margaret’s husband. However, Margaret’s refusal to recognize Billy as the man beneath the mask leads to Billy’s death, also. Margaret is never aware of either Dion’s suffering or that of Billy. She recognizes only the Pannish mask of Dion Anthony, and when the mask is dead, she spends the rest of her life glorifying its memory. Like Dion’s mother before her, Margaret plays house, selfishly guards her dolls against the
world outside, and in the end retains the calm assurance that she has fulfilled her purpose in life.

Yet, Abbie survives in *The Great God Brown*—not as an individual, however, but as Cybel, the Earth Goddess, the abstract symbol of fertility. Cybel is the sacred cow; she is the wise sister for the tormented artist Dion and the materialist Billy. O’Neill seemed unable to place in the modern setting a living Earth Mother, for society rejects with shame a completely amoral, pagan woman, and it makes of her a pariah. O’Neill contends, however, that Cybel holds the key to the acceptance of life, since it is to her that both Dion and Billy return for the courage with which to die.

Thus, in *The Great God Brown* woman increases in stature to the point that although the protagonist is still masculine, his dependence upon love has become essential for his survival, while woman has reached the status of the independent seeker after life. Man has, then, become the tool of woman’s quest for life, and he is helpless to avert her ravaging advancement.

The last two plays under consideration firmly establish O’Neill’s absorption with female personality. In *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* man has become completely subordinated to her needs. He is compelled to seek her approval. He is, in fact, her slave, and he hates himself for his dependence upon her. But if modern man in tortured by modern woman, modern woman is all the more tortured by her own insatiable desires. In *Strange Interlude* Nina possesses all the alluring feminine traits that make her desirable to the men in her life. She maintains control over all of them throughout the play, yet she is never content in any one role. Only once, in her pregnancy, does Nina find fleeting happiness as relinquish control, she regresses to her childhood worship of the Father, who remains the symbol of death in life. Nina is masculine in her desire for power, feminine in her quest for love, and in
the combination of these traits she is totally destructive to the man she uses to obtain her goals. There is no self-sacrificing facet in her personality. There is no unselfish motive sustained in the play. She partakes ruthlessly of life, yet remains unsatisfied; and when she returns to the sterile Father in the character of Charlie Marsden, she retires from life, having found only suffering and pain in her adventure and having attributed her failure to the Father’s challenge of her right to live.

In *Mourning Become Electra*, the effect of the sense of isolation and loneliness is actually felt by all the members of the Mannon’s family, and they are forced to bear its brunt. In this play O’Neill again separates into two characters the Earth Mother and the Seductress, now the destroyer. Christian Mannon is a combination of Abbie and Cybel, and she is more than both of them. She is the beautiful incestuous Mother, who holds under her possessive spell Ezra, the Father God, Adam, her young lover, and Orin, her jealously possessive son. Christine is sympathetically treated only from the standpoint that she alone desires life over the death-in-life symbolized in the Mannons. More possessive than Abbie, Christine not only murders her husband for love but nurtures her son’s incestuous desire for to the point that he is incapable of any normal reaction of love. Furthermore, Christine’s aggressive nature makes her unworthy and incapable of selfless love. No longer, then, does O’Neill conceive of even the Earth Mother as a passive, comforting refuge.

Lavinia is a more noble creation than Christine, in spite of the fact that she is the female counterpart of her Puritan, life-denying Father. She destroys not for love, but as the Father’s executioner, and inwardly, like Ezra, she seeks to return to the worship of paganism symbolized in the Blessed Isles. Lavinia is, of course, as ineffectual as the rest of her clan in fulfilling her desire to love, for she cannot escape her heritage of shame. She cannot love without guilt. She cannot, therefore, create.
Like Nina, Lavinia is masculine in her quest for life. She refuses to accept the Father’s distaste for abandoned love. However, while Nina retained enough of the fertility of the pagan Mother to create and actively participate in life, Lavinia is capable only of desiring life and is completely unable to consummate her desires.

Thus, through an examination of these plays for this study, an effort has been made to trace woman’s role in O’Neill’s scheme of things, and in doing so, to show that O’Neill become so engrossed in the nature of woman as to find her a more fitting subject for tragedy than was man. For in the final analysis, O’Neill’s greatest tragedies are concerned not with the tragic hero, but with the tragic heroine.