Chapter I

Introduction

Drama is one of the powerful genres, for it accommodates poetry and narration of an experience or an occurrence. The questioning attitude towards the past ideologies is a major concern of the art of the twentieth century. Movies and television plays are steadily produced, but they cannot be a real substitute for drama. As Alan S. Downer says in his book, *The American Theatre*, theatre is “a living art-the playwright or director manipulates bodies and voices in actual time and visible space, creating afresh at each performance a unique total work of art, in which creation... the audience assists. The theatre is a communal art; it is an experience shared by its performers and by its spectators – not by ones and twos in the living room but by hundreds in its special home, the playhouse” (Alan S. Downer. *The American Theatre*. 212).

Drama has undergone a sea – change in various countries during different ages. As Louis Broussard writes that “thought attack” has existed at all times. Because of his re-enactment, Drama is considered to be the most effective medium, and, as he comments, it “stations man between the past and a future that promises greater revolution than any previous change in Western culture” (Louis Broussard, *Contemporary Allegory from Eugene O’Neill to Tennessee Williams*. Norman, p.3).

A study of the modern plays will show us its richness and variety. Elder Olson points out that there is “an immense and rapid proliferation of forms, coupled with the discovery and successful employment of new devices and techniques” (Elder Olsen, *Tragedy and the Theory of Drama*. p.243). There is a swift and steady expansion in subject matter, too. The other side of the Modern Drama – the defects may be (a) Verse has almost disappeared with some exceptions (b) It is mostly prose drama. The
prose too is not exalted, and it is more or like ordinary speech. (c) The language of the inarticulate does not permit the expression of subtle or profound thought or emotion. Consequently, Modern Drama has to forgo the subtler expressions, thoughts and emotions.

The social milieu in which the playwrights live exerts a considerable influence on their minds. And consequently the inspiration and the prevalent thought processes contribute largely to the tenor of the art of the playwrights.

Plays by Shakespeare or Marlow or Webster reveal extensive vocabulary and greatly diversified grammatical constructions. The major characters have their distinctive manner of speaking, and other characters speak in different ways. What a character thinks and feels, what sort of person he is, and sometimes even what goes on in the secret layers of his mind – all these are learnt from his speech, which may be of any length. Elder Olson argues that all these characteristics will be absent in a modern play.

In Modern Drama, new devices and techniques have evolved. As Olson argues, the new devices have “the same general tendency to decrease the distance between actors and audience, to give a greater impression of immediacy or a greater continuity of the drama with life or to commit the drama to greater and greater realism” (Ibid.245-46). This realism lies in almost all plays. But it is a very narrow realism.

The common features of day-to-day life and lives that are lived by people like us are taken as the criterion for reality in modern plays. It has developed from the naturalism of the 19th century and has evolved out of a protest against artificialities in drama, as an exponent of truth.
Because the usual is likely to be uninteresting in an ideal drama, the unusual has to be introduced. The audiences experience a revelation of the character’s inner strength or weakness when they witness the character facing a crisis in his life. H.L. Mencken once termed this “the terrifying key hole.”

Olson makes a valuable observation:

Modern drama as a whole not merely contemporary American drama, but European as well – and that from Ibsen onward, has managed not to catch anything like a total image of life. Wonderfully as it has caught particular aspects, aspects never caught and never seen so before... it has not caught certain others of higher importance (Ibid.247).

American society was in an interesting stage of rapid transition after the First World War. In the 1920’s the parallel process of disintegration and reconstruction of the traditional social structure resulted for a few years in a liberal, even irresponsible and apparent freedom, that left its impact on the literature of the time. American drama was in a curious state of evolution. The period was marked by the commercialization of the American theatre. In 1896 the first theatrical Syndicate was formed which gradually gained control over most theatres in the century. The stage was dominated by the light entertainment, sentimental and sensational pieces. Playwriting meant compromising to the popular taste. The playwright’s job was to introduce dramatic elements that were appealing to the masses. American dramatists of the time had no native tradition to the fall back on. Even the best American dramatists of the time like Moody, Herne and Fitch were of ordinary standing as compared to their European contemporaries-Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw and Synge (Egil Tomqvist, A Drama of Souls in O’Neill’s Super-naturalistic Technique.18-19).

After the First World War American drama has transformed tremendously. In the 1920’s the parallel process of disintegration and reconstruction of the traditional
social structure resulted for a few years in a liberal, even irresponsible and apparent freedom, that left its impact on the literature of the period. American drama was in a curious state of evolution. The period was marked by the commercialization of the American theatre. In 1896 the first Theatrical Syndicate was formed which gradually gained control over most theatres in the country. The stage was dominated by light entertainment, sentimental and sensational pieces. Playwriting meant compromising to the popular taste. The playwright’s job was to introduce dramatic elements that were appealing to the masses. American dramatists of the time had no native tradition to fall back on. Even the best American dramatist of the time like Moody, Herne and Fitch were of ordinary standing as compared to their European contemporaries—Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw and Synge.

It is inevitable oddity that the principal American dramatist to date should have no American precursors. Eugene O’Neill’s art as a playwright owes most to Strindberg’s, and something crucial, though rather less, to Ibsen’s. Intellectually, O’Neill’s ancestry also has little to do with American tradition, with Emerson or William James or any other of our cultural speculators. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud formed O’Neill’s sense of what little was possible for any of us. Even where American literary tradition was strongest, in the novel and poetry, it did not much affect O’Neill. His novelists were Zola and Conrad; his poets were Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Swinburne. Overwhelmingly an Irish-American, with his Jansenist Catholicism transformed into anger at god, he had little active interest in the greatest American writer, Whitman, though his spiritual darkness has a curious, antithetical relation to Whitman’s overt analysis of national character.

Yet O’Neill, despite his many limitations, is the most American of our handful of dramatists who matter most: Miller, Wilder, Williams, Albee, perhaps Mamet and
Shephard. A national quality that is literary, yet has no clear relation to our domestic
literary traditions, is nearly always present in O’Neill’s strongest works. We can
recognize Hawthorne in Henry James and Whitman (however repressed) in T.S.Eliot,
while the relation of Hemingway and Faulkner to Mark Twain is just as evident as
their dept to Conrad. Besides the question of his genre (since there was no vital
American drama before O’Neill), there would seem to be some to be some hidden
factor that governed O’Neill’s ambiguous relation to literary past. It was certainly not
the lack of critical discernment on O’Neill’s part. His admiration for Hart Crane’s
poetry, at its most difficult, was solely responsible for the publication of Crane’s first
volume, White Buildings, for which O’Neill initially offered to write the introduction,
withdrawing in favour of Allen Tate when the impossibility of his writing a critical
essay on Crane’s complexities became clear to O’Neill. But to have recognized Hart
Crane’s genius, so early and so helpfully, testifies to O’Neill’s profound insights into
the American literary imagination at its strongest.

Modern American drama came alive in the second quarter of the twentieth
century when the artistic dexterity of Eugene O’Neill made its presence felt on the
international scene. Before him, the shallowness of ordinary practitioners of theatre
was an uncontended reality that had its roots in the need to communicate with an
unselective audience. O’Neill’s adept pursuit, however, refrained from such
compromise and evolved a new tradition of drama, far removed from the
superficiality and glibness of his precursors. It is in the felicity of this favourable
ambience that the genius of an ensuing playwright like Eugene O’Neill thrived. The
writing of each presents a realistic image of the workings of human psychology. The
stage for them became a platform for expressing the complexity of human
consciousness.
American Drama has the shortest tradition because its tastes have changed frequently. American ideational life finds its reflection not only in intellectual and political spheres but also in literature particularly in plays, for the theatre is a public and social event. Playwrights give form and flesh to the ideas and thoughts. Ihab Hassan, in his book, Contemporary American Literature writes that “neither the Puritan inheritance nor the harsh quality of another frontier life contributes to the development of a native theatre” (Ihab Hassan, Contemporary American Literature, 138).

Only in the early part of the 20th century did American Drama develop its footing. The staying power of a dramatist depends, Gerald Weales writes, “nor on the ideas he dresses, but the dressing itself, on the dramatic vitality of his vehicle and the cross-cultural validity of his characters” (Gerald Weale. “Drama”. Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing. p. 396). The important playwright in this period is Eugene O’Neill who combines elements of naturalism, expressionism and Greek tragedy in a distinctively and dramatically powerful language.

O’Neill is one of the most original and versatile geniuses. According to Barrett Clark, in private life he was shy and silent but when he took up his pen, he became terrific. He led an adventurous life, gold-prospecting, reporting, barn storming and mule-tending on a cattle-boat. His experience of rough life on board ships and in ports prepared him for a writing career. J.W. Marriott writes that his real inspiration comes not from “books or theories, but from the contacts he has made in a less cultural atmosphere” (J.W. Marriott. Modern Drama, p. 269).

About O’Neill, Gerald Weales’ observation is the most apt. “The phenomenon among this group is O’Neill. Most playwrights’ careers come to an end; O’Neill’s came to a culmination” (Gerald Weales, “Drama”. Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Literature, 138).
American Writing, p.398). He is considered America’s major playwright and was honoured with the Nobel Prize in 1936. He turned his back on the symbolic, excessively literary experiments of the 1920s and 1950s and returned to the naturalism of his early plays. Since the plays written by him during the 30s and 40s were performed only after the war many of them posthumously, they were considered to be the American Theatre of the 50s. His rough, bleak, uncompromising voice reached a wide audience in a decade when conventional playwrights were looking for easy solutions.

The Emperor Jones has Jungian influence and deals with the quest for identity. His The Hairy Ape also has Jungian actions with philosophical background and with an emphasis on the search for identity. Desire Under the Elms has Freudian echoes and it is the form of a classical tragedy. Strange Interlude unveils the relatively of good and evil while touching on determinism, fatalism and free will. His Mourning Becomes Electra has the Electra complex describes installation and its movement in from comedy play with autobiographical elements. O’Neil, Eliot and Wilder are the writers of dramatic allegory and as Louis Broussart points out, they have “completed their cycle of thought at and country” (Broussard, Louis. Contemporary Allegory from Eugene O’Neill to Tennessee Williams, p.104).

The other notable playwrights in the 20s and 30s are Maxwell Anderson, Robert E.Sherwood, Elmer Rice, Thornton Wilder, Clifford Odets and Lillian Hellman. In giving diversity and magnitude to American Theatre, their roles are significant.

The older playwrights continued to wield their dramatic power in the 40s and 50s. Other mentionable playwrights are S.N. Behrman, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, George S.Kaufman, Moss Hart, Philip Barry, Sidney Kingsley, and William
Saroyan. Archibald Mac Leish, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote and Edward Albee are the other important names.

In the post-war period, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller determine the earliest directions of drums and dominate the stage for more than a decade. The post-war period depicts distinctive characteristics; the plays reveal the concern for the problem-best man of this age. About these two playwrights, Ihab Hassan writes,

Coming out of rural, even mythological Mississippi, Williams plunges into the underside of the mind, peopling his plays with violent and exotic figures. Miller, on the other hand comes from the urban, Jewish milieu of New York: and through his attachment to the conventions of the realistic stage weaken with the years, he never forsakes realism as an attitude (Ihab Hassan. Contemporary American Literature, p.139).

Arthur Miller, like Tennessee Williams attempted to write tragedies, His *Death of a Salesman* aroused controversial opinions because Willy Loman’s situation in representative of, or at my rate analogous to, the situation so many people find themselves in. *The Crucible* one of the closest modern approximations to tragedy, achieves its effect through the moral issues involved. His other famous plays are: *A View from the Bridge, After the Fall, All My Sons*, and *The Man who had all the Luck*. Miller intimately knows the little society of the family which he convincingly documented in his plays.

Eugene Gladstone O’Neill was born on October 16, 1888 in New York. He was the son of James O’Neill, an actor-man-ager who sensational success on the stage, especially in his favourite role of the Count in the dramatic version of “The Count of Monte Cristo”. Since Eugene’s first seven years were spent touring all over the country with his father, the boy got access to the theatrical world at a very tender age. In 1909, he entered into a hasty and clandestine marriage with a refined sheltered girl, Kathleen Jelkes. To prevent the marriage his father had arranged a voyage to Honduras for his son. The expedition only gave O’Neill, malaria, and he had to return
and join his father’s company as an actor and assistant manager. Meanwhile, a son, young Eugene was born. O’Neill, however, made no attempt to meet his wife or son. This marriage was finally dissolved two years later in 1912. Restless in his assignments as an actor and manager, he again took to sea and tried odd jobs in Buenos Aires, none of which proved to be of much consequence. He came back to New York and threw himself with gusto into the life of the water-front. His favourite haunt was a disreputable tavern called Jimmy-the-Priest’s, which later provided the setting for many of his important plays. After a brief spell of acting, in which O’Neill played a small part in “Monte Cristo’, he became a reporter for the *New London Telegraph*. This career as a reporter was interrupted by an attack of tuberculosis in 1912.

All through childhood and early manhood, O’Neill’s family life had never been peaceful. His mother’s drug addiction which had started at the time of Eugene’s birth had by his youth resulted in her emotional withdrawal from the family and a regression to her girlhood. His elder brother Jamie gradually became a drunken wreck. The antagonism O’Neill felt towards his father persisted for a long time. The two brothers, in their adolescence and youth, frequently went out on drinking sprees. It was this profligate life that brought on the tuberculosis, mentioned earlier. Eugene had to spend six months in a sanatorium. This enforced solitude gave him time to reflect upon his experiences and take a decision regarding his life.

O’Neill read widely and came under the spell of Greek writers and Scandinavian dramatists, Ibsen and Strindberg. Soon he began writing and turned out a number of one act plays. The one-act plays *Bound East for Cardiff* was the first O’Neill’s play to, be staged in 1916 by the Provincetown Players. About this time, O’Neill met Agnes Boulton, a writer of magazine stories and married her in April,
1918. *The Long Voyage Home* (1917) and *Moon of the Caribbes* (1918) revealed his extraordinary talent. The year 1920 brought O’Neill success and fame, as he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his play *Beyond the Horizon*. Other plays like *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1921), *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and *Welded* (1923) followed in quick succession. *Anna Christie* won for him the Pulitzer Prize a second time in 1922. His use of expressionistic technique is most pronounced in *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1922). The year 1922 also witnessed the production of *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* the tragedy of a black youth and a tarnished white girl whose marriage is wrecked by whose marriage is wrecked by the racial feelings that run deep in their subconscious mind.

The twenties proved to be a personally tragic decade for O’Neill. He lost three members of his family in close succession. His father James O’Neill died in August 1920, his mother Ella in February 1922, and his brother Jane in November 1923. Meanwhile O’Neill’s second marriage was also proving to be a failure. In 1928, he abandoned Agnes and their two children and married the actress Carlotta Monterey. This marriage brought him companionship and happiness and lasted till his death.

In 1928, O’Neill won the Pulitzer Prize for his psychological play *Strange Interlude*. His *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) is a thirteen act trilogy, modelled closely on Aeschylus’s ‘Oresteia’. These misogynistic compositions were however followed by an uncomplicated comedy, *Ah! Wilderness* (1933) this was perhaps under the influence of the happily wedded life he now shared with Carlotta. His play *Days without End* (1934) marks his return to faith. O’Neill then retired temporarily from creative work. The years of the Second World War (1939-1945) were for him filled with gloom and pessimism. Its toll of life and property was terrifying and affected the playwright deeply.
After a decade of retirement O’Neill, returned to the theatre, with his creative splendour all the more garnished. He went back to realism in the five plays of his last productive years-plays which were conceived as a part of a cycle of eleven plays about his mother and the other members of his unfortunate family. *The Iceman Cometh* appeared in 1939 and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was completed in 1943. The autobiography in these plays, though conspicuous, is transformed into art. *Long Day’s Journey into Night* written much earlier in 1940 was published three years after the dramatist’s death in 1953. O’Neill was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, posthumously for this play in 1957. Being the most personal of his plays it is a simple naturalistic family drama without much plot contrivance. The greatest recognition of O’Neill’s genius was the award of the Noble Prize for literature to him in 1936.

The scenes of O’Neill’s plays may be realistic but the realism is merely a fictitious thing . . . “it is intended as a symbol of an inward state” . . . in a sense he never in realism sought anything but symbol, never in the concrete failed to shadow man, the eternal protagonist in the grip of natural forces greater than himself.” It is an interaction or a clash of forces, expressed in symbols which signify the meaning of the conflict. The realists may deny the ultimate separation of the symbols and meanings, or expressions and inward states; they cannot deny the primacy of the forces or states of the inner life. For this reason and in order to interpret O’Neill truly, we shall classify the content of his work according to this inward state expressed in is plays.

The first of the better plays have romantic titles. Some are romantic plays, but most of his early writings, though there is a romantic thread running through nearly all, he treated so realistically that they must be classed as pieces of realism. His own most real experience had had for its background the far-off places and much of his
time was spent on a boat. His experience afforded him contact with men who, though possessed of common human hungers, had become through their weaknesses and lusts, disillusioned cynics, such as the Donkey man in *The Moon of the Caribbees*, or sentimentalist, like Yank in the same play. These indicate the influence of Marx and Kropotkin, the reading of whom had led him to place the blame for these derelicts on civilization.

Through strong character, a person gains his individuality, but though it he may also lose his balance, “the golden mean”. O’Neill portrays intensified character in single dominant motives for he believes that “It is only when we are under strain that we are truly ourselves. When the string hangs loose custom and habit rule; when the string is tightened character is shredded into atavistic strains; forgotten memories sing in the sound,” In moments of great stress life copies melodrama. Thus we have a large number of plays by O’Neill in which some overpowering motive is at work in at least one character. This strong desire becomes an obsession. It masters the whole individual, even to the destruction of the man.

Early in his work, he began to see this tendency in man. In *Ile*, a whaling master is possessed with the idea of coming home with his vessel filled with oil. Two years are spent in seas of ice. The wife can no longer endure the barrenness of the life. She finally succeeds in getting a promise from her husband to sail homeward, but almost immediately he is told that the ice is breaking. Forgetting his promise, he orders the ship to go forward for oil. The wife goes insane. This invincible will of the clash of forces . . . the fundamental element of drama and many of O’Neill’s plays are built upon this tendency in man.

O’Neill is interested in psychological studies. Among these we may mention his studies of fear in *Emperor Jones*, in *Lazarus Laughed*, in *Dreamy Kid*, and *All
God’s Chillun. Fear in the form of superstition is also used in Gold, and Anna Christie. With regard to temperament and moods, O’Neill, like other dramatists finds the psychology of sex a good laboratory. However, he has not carried his interest to the extremes of Strindberg. Welded, First Man, Diff’rent, Desire, and Strange Interlude, are definite attempts to show the clash between the sexes. He shows in each of these the tendency to live temperamentally; to throw off the joke of human law and to follow mood. O’Neill has never been as successful in psychology studies as in his emotional plays.

He is interested in revealing “ingrained inclinations toward life.” This gives him an interest in races. Here he has opportunity to study characters under great emotional strain. Dreamy Kid, All God’s Chillun Got Wings and Emperor Jones show both the strength and the weakness of the negro. In the Fountain O’Neill brings out his admiration for the stoical, contemplative man in the character of Nano, the Indian, and again for the philosophical Oriental, in Kulai Khan, and his Chinese court philosopher, in Marco Millions.

In spite of the voluntarism in O’Neill, he is not ignorant of the “clutch of circumstances.” In Moon, he is, or seems to be, conscious of the “forces, the subtlest influences which work compellingly on men and women who believe themselves free agents.” Lazarus Laughed, and Dynamo, therefore, comes as attempts to deal with religion in these modern days. This interest challenges his philosophy of life as whole, problems such as time, purpose, memory, progress, and conservation of values. To detect O’Neill’s position in these questions, we are led to his work, the total attitude toward life in addition to the form and content of his plays.

The biographical glimpses into the life of O’Neill grant us some perspective on his individual involvements and commitments which unavoidably bear an imprint
on his character portrayals. His projection of women, however, is not governed
entirely by his personal prejudice. O’Neill has also been influenced by his immediate
cultural environment. At the time when he wrote, the theories of Freud and Jung had
gained popular acceptance. Much human behaviour was explained according to his
postulates. O’Neill imbibed these ideas and subconsciously employed them in his
artistic endeavours. Therefore, a brief mention of these theories would not be
unwarranted here.

Freudianism involves the literary hypothesis formulated by Sigmund Freud
and his associates. According to Ernest Jones’s Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud,
this theory establishes the preference of intuition over individual reasoning as a means
of arriving at reality. Among the various adaptations of Freudian concepts the
phenomenon of infant sexuality and the Oedipus complex found an expression in the
plays of the dramatist under discussion. Freud was convinced that too much
repression was inevitably harmful and finds an outlet through illicit channels. He and
his followers sought evidence to affirm that all deviant behaviour could be accounted
for by referring to sexual maladjustments and carnal repressions. This theory of incest
is based on the premise that every child is attracted to the parents of the opposite sex.
This attraction, in some cases, assumes abnormal proportions and develops into a
complex, inhibiting normal heterosexual relationships. Such unnatural bonding
between a mother and son is termed the Oedipus complex while the unnatural tie
between the father and daughter is named the Electra complex.

Freudianism, therefore, implies that the complexes of the psyche can be
broadly accounted for by the strife between the instinct to express and the obligation
to repress. The critic, Chabrowe is of the view that O’Neill was not satisfied with the
Freudian view of life because the “struggle between the two sets of instincts as the
basis of everything tends to reduce man’s stature rather than enlarge its” (Leonard Chabrowe, *Ritual and Pathos*, 109). Neither can the behaviour of O’Neill’s protagonists be entirely accounted for by Freudian postulates. O’Neill was therefore led to Jung.

Carl Gustav Jung, like Freud does not regard the libido (vital urge) as an expression of sexual energy alone. He designates it as “neutral energy”. Repression, according to him is not harmful to man. On the contrary it provides for the canalization of the libido and formation of the individual consciousness. As Hull points out in his Symbols of Transformation, the conquering of the libido is heroic task. The overcoming of the mother is symbolic of the death of the infantile soul and the rebirth of the heroic soul (R.F.C. Hull, *Symbols of Transformation*, 292-293). The fact that a number of O’Neill characters display a regression and a craving for parental and maternal affections in adulthood, testify to his indebted to the Freudian and Jungian dialectics.

Since anatomy cannot entirely determine a women’s nature the primacy of asserting, sociological factors is essential. A women’s attitude and responses are governed to a great extent by social and cultural precepts. She models her behaviour into a definite pattern and each pattern corresponds to an archetype. The archetype cannot be known in itself as simply equitable with something else such as anatomical structure or specific cultural traditions, but can only be understood through images and through the behavioural and emotional response it arouses. Jung, moreover, considered the masculine and feminine as two polarities of the human psyche—not opposite but complementary to each other “whose interchange of energy is the life energy of the psyche for the human being” (Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology*, 143).
Jung categorized the Archetypal Feminism into four broad types: Eve, Helen, Amazon and Sophia. (R.F.C. Hull, *Practice of Psychotherapy*, 174). This scheme was later studied, modified and renamed by Toni Wolff, a close associate and collaborator of Jung. In Wolff’s categorization the names have been adopted from functions rather than from mythic personages. Toni Wolff calls these functional categories-Mother, Hetaira, Amazon and Medium. Mother is the collective and Hetaira the individual from of personal functioning, Amazon the collective and medium the individual form of non-personal functioning (E.C. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest: Basic Concepts of Analytical Psychology*, 178). For individual a woman has to assimilate all the four functional character type in her personality. This means that every woman potentially has all structural forms, although one or two more readily accessible to her than other and becomes her pattern of functional adaptation (Toni Wolff, *Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche*, 7).

The mother or the maternal woman is one who affirms a woman’s tendency to contain and relate to what springs from it. A woman, belonging to this archetype tends to be ‘motherly’ irrespective of her actual relation with the relational object. The positive mother is characterized by the functions of nourishing, bearing, releasing and guiding. In the negative aspect, the maternal woman tends to be anxiously overprotective and possessive. The mother archetype is manifest in this case as an anxious nursing being who appoints herself a care-taker and a guardian even when her services are no longer required (Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology*, 198-199). Such a mother type goes to the extent of attacking the individuality and masculinity of man. Even in her relation with her husband or mate she reacts with motherly fervour psychologically reducing him to what Jung calls the *puer eternus*, the ‘eternal boy’ (R.F.C. Hull, *The Development of*
Personality, 191). Thus the negative expressions of the Mother type woman can have serious repercussions on the children as well as other with whom she comes in close contact.

The Hetaira or the courtesan is instinctively oriented towards the individual and relates to the man for his own sake and not as a father to her children. For her the man and her personal relationship with him are of utmost importance. She can be seen as a woman whose primary commitment is to the interpersonal relationship and psychic fulfilment of the man. She is capable of transcending social and marital barriers, for her commitment is to the man only. In other words, a Hetaira is a companion to man at many levels at once. Such a woman can operate from within and without marriages. She constantly fills the gap which a maternally oriented woman may leave in a husband’s psyche giving him an important for himself as a person and not only as a husband and a father (Castillejo, Knowing Women, pp. 65-66). The positive Hetaira, according to Whitmont, becomes a guiding and motivating force for man and leads him to higher goals or to a conscious realization of his self. In such cases she assumes the role of the ‘femme fatale’, the negative Hetaira. In the negative form the Hetaira addresses herself to the shadow side of the individual and hence proves destructive (E.C. Whitmont, The Symbolic Quest: Basic Concepts of Analytical Psychology, p.181).

The Amazon, as Castillejo interprets her is in contrast to the Mother and Hetaira, being self contained and independent. She relates to man as a colleague, comrade or competitor. An Amazonian is incapable of deep personal and emotional relationships. The alliance she shares with him is on a functional basis, aimed primarily to satisfy her biological needs. The Amazonian can never gain personal fulfilment through man. This woman is thus, more of a competitor and rival than a
beloved or a wife. The Amazon makes no personal demands but she deserves to be taken seriously. The positive Amazon inspires a man’s ambitions. She challenges him, forcing to better his own position. The negative Amazon, on the other hand, is a kind of rival sister, who driven by envy wants equality with man and will not recognize any male authority. She certainly does not accept any possibility of male superiority. Man only holds a peripheral importance for her. Since she is incapable of a differentiated and deep relationship with any man, sexual promiscuity becomes one of her other negative traits (Castillejo, *Knowing Women*, pp. 66-68).

The fourth personality type formulated by Toni Wolff is the Medium through which the collective unconscious finds expression. “The medial woman is immersed in the psychic atmosphere of her environment and the spirit of her period, but above all in the collective (impersonal) unconscious” (E.C. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest: Basic Concepts of Analytical Psychology*, 180). Since she has the power of knowing and revealing what is going on beneath the surface of the group in which she lives, she may be immensely valuable. She emphasizes the mysterious, magical and spiritual side of the feminine (Toni Wolff, *Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche*, 10). The positive medial woman inspires others to become conscious of their own psychic contents and those of others. She produces ecstasy in man by endowing him with a sense of liberation from the conventions of the group and from one’s personality. The ecstasy comes from a sense of rebirth, regeneration and immortality which the woman enables man to achieve. The mediumistic woman, in her negative aspects is likely to forget the earthly realities, the limitations and needs of her people. She is unable to differentiate the world of the archetypes—which express itself through images symbols and dreams from the world everyday reality (Castillejo, *Knowing Women*, 69).
A close study of the women protagonists in the plays of O’Neill reveals an inevitable tendency in this playwright to relegate his women portraits to either one or a combination of two of the personality types discussed above. Besides being subject to the current literary trends him also focus on the question of the identity of woman in relation to the socio-economic and psychological factors. O’Neill displays a marked concern for the identity crisis a woman faces. This is with reference to the factors of self fulfilment and her view regarding happiness, love, marriage and finally the compulsions that drive her to do what she does. He shows a remarkable awareness of the dilemmas arising out of the conflict between a woman’s own aspirations and the traditional role expectation. O’Neill is thus able to avoid the prevalent tendency in male authors to depict female characters more or less according to the culturally stereotypic ideas about women. He in a genuine effort towards better understanding, created unconventional role models for women.

This could be a direct outcome of literary renaissance mentioned earlier and the reactionary movements that had sprung up in America in defiance of patriarchal dominance. Each had its own self-image and its quarrel with the ‘system’. One of these newly emergent dissident groups, the oldest in terms of militant protest is the Feminist Movement. Generally two major phases are postulated in reference to this uprising—the first encompassing the period from 1830 to 1930 and the second lasting from 1930 to 1960. “If the earlier feminist movement was a successful effort to extend women’s sphere, the new feminism is an attempt to break down the barriers between the male and female spheres more completely” (Gail Minault, *Indian Journal of American Studies, 31-32*). Whereas the nineteenth and twentieth century ‘social’ feminists had fought for social equality and the vote, the later feminists insist on striking upon nothing less than the male oriented nature of human society. Genuine
feminism is a movement for growth, through equal rights and opportunities. Its aim is to relieve women from the tyranny of ignorance. Isolation and vulnerability and involve them in the larger problems of the society, as a whole. These radicalists deeply question many hitherto accepted concepts of the nature of human relationships and the elements common to human condition.

The feminist perspective starts from the premise that women and men are constitutionally equal and share the same human capabilities. Observed differences, therefore demand a critical analysis of the social institutions that cause them. Eva Figes aptly points out:

Man’s vision of woman is not objective, but an uneasy combination of what he wishes her to be and what he fears her to be, and it is to this mirror image that woman has to comply… woman is taught is desire not what her mother desired for herself, but what her father and all man find desirable in a woman. Not what she is but what she should be… But since the standard of womanhood is set by man for men and by women, no relaxation of standards is allowable; she is either an absolute woman or nothing at all, totally rejected (Figes Eva, The Caste for Women in Revolt,14).

This is the reason why the male image of woman has a tendency to split into two. Sometimes she is seen as an angel, a creature on a pedestal, elevated to an absurdly unreal and hypocritical ideal. At other times she is viewed as an embodiment of evil, a creature of corruption and deceit bringing sorrow to man. Many psychological and anthropologists refer to this polarity as the “male’s virgin-prostitute complex” (Kay F. Reinartz, Women: A Feminist Perceptive, 296).

In either case, she resumes the status of an accessory with reference to man. The three things he values women for are service, sex, and love. So, it is presumed that a woman has an absolute need for man’s love without which her life becomes meaningless. The psychologist Erikson was of the view that a woman’s needs are
satisfying by “quest for a mate, child rearing and home-making, and her identity is loosely formed in relational ties dependent on males” (Chatterji, 7).

Sigourney is reported to have once said, “A woman is nobody, a wife is everything and a mother is, next to God, all powerful” (Figes, 254). These female archetypes, it is observed are interpreted according to male patterns, and the male patterns eclipse woman’s experience altogether. The feminine is reduced to an attribute of the masculine personality rather than seen as an archetype derived from women’s experience. Simone de Beauvoir accurately brings out the difference.

Women are the Second Sex because they are experienced by men as “others”, that is as essentially and inescapably different. It is not possible to be separate and equal, because being separate prevents one from acting in the one real world, man’s world. (qtd. in Janeway, 108) The irony of the situation strikes us when we see women accepting the male standards as their own, thus completing the vicious circle. Presented with an image in the mirror she has danced to that image in a hypnotic trance. Since she always believed that image was herself, she became just that.

Femininity also stands for something light, non-serious and complacent and is a kind of a denial of the weighty, self-assertive masculinity. The idea that it is the essence of femininity to be associated with a male whom one genuinely believes to be one superior is well ingrained in society as well as the individual psyche. It implies seeking a male partner, whom one feels is superior enough to justify one’s subordinate.

Eugene O’Neill was genuinely one of the most controversial literary figures of the twentieth century. He has been called everything from an immature, frustrated melo-dramatist to the greatest dramatic genius of our century. A moderate and more realistic evaluation is, perhaps, to call O’Neill one of the most significant pioneer of the American theatre, for O’Neill’s greatness grew out of his passionate desire to
dramatize expressionistically the conflict between conscious ideals and subconscious forces, a struggle which is at the very core of man’s self-existence. In attempting to achieve the expression of this conflict, O’Neill created a new theatre in America.

The theatre in America at that time was composed of melodramas, like The Count of Monte Cristo, in which the hero struggles against the villain and wins. O’Neill felt that man was his own villain and that it was the dramatist’s duty to portray man’s struggle within and without himself. Both Ibsen and Strindberg had begun dramatizing modern man and his problem by the middle 1800’s. Being an ardent admirer of Strindberg’s ideas and technique, O’Neill turned to... “Strindberg’s ‘expressionistic’ dramatic style of distortion of action, speech and scene” (The Theatre in Our Times, 253). In so doing, O’Neill brought modern drama across the ocean to the American stage.

This study mainly focuses on O’Neill’s concepts on men and women. All the concepts of men and women are based on life O’Neill. The readers could find the autobiographical elements in all the plays of O’Neill. The reader could find O’Neill in every plays through some characters. The main themes of his plays are isolation and loneliness. The core chapter entitled ‘O’Neill’s Concept of men’ is devoted to the analysis of the major plays Eugene O’Neill, written during the last phase of his career; they are: The Iceman Cometh (1939), Long Day’s Journey into Night (1941), A Touch of the Poet (1942) and A Moon for the Misbegotten (1942). In these highly autobiographical plays O’Neill portrays the most agonised picture of man. They deal with the characters, who sustain their survival on their broken dreams which breed a sense of isolation and loneliness—the most dangerous pest, consuming mankind. All these plays are the results of the personal anguish and desperation of the dramatist. As Doris V. Falk observes:
“O’Neill returned in these last plays to acceptance of struggle and flights as inseparable from and intrinsic to life process. Now there is no way out but death. The struggle in these plays is essentially the same as it had always been in his work: the conscious intellect at war with conscious drives, the laceration of love and hate in every close human relationship, and the desperate search for self among self among masks” (Doris V. Falk, Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension, 157).

The major theme in O’Neill’s plays is man’s struggle to find a purpose for existing and by that very struggle, to justify his existence. To O’Neill man has within him two conflicting forces that are at war with each other. One of these forces may be called broadly the Life force, man’s subconscious instinctive nature, or as O’Neill said, “… the Force behind—(Fate, God, Our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—mystery certainly)…” (Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day., 199) The other force, which is many times tragically opposed to the Life Force, is man’s conscious desires, his struggle to succeed in life, to find outward satisfaction in life. These two forces, of course, are interrelated. In other words, although man desperately tries to fashion himself after his conscious ideals, he ironically sets according to his subconscious or instinctive desires, and if he suppresses these subconscious or instinctive desires and seeks to act against them, he becomes hopelessly split against himself. To O’Neill, then, life is “… the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression” (Ibid., 199).

O’Neill used many forms of expression in dramatizing man’s conflict with the Life Force. In the beginning, he expressed the conflict as being between reality and illusion—man’s primitive nature versus his romantic ideals. Within the scope of this conflict was man’s attempt knowing him, to belong to a purpose, to rise above his basic drives and attain self-realization and perfection. In this struggle man wrestled on
the edge of the abyss, for in his struggle to “being,” to acquire, to possess, he bordered on denying the presence of the Life Force and sought to make of himself his own creator and, ironically, become his own destroyer. In these early plays the romantic ideal took upon itself the cloak of reality. For example, to Robert Mayo in *Beyond the Horizon*, the only beauty in life is the mysterious escape from reality to the dream beyond. His tragic flaw is his inability to reconcile himself with life, to his own imperfections and weaknesses. It is significant to note that at this phase of his writing, O’Neill felt that the struggle was worthwhile and that without the struggle Robert Mayo would have had no real experience in life above that of existing in an animal state.

In his use of masks, an expressionistic from which can be traced throughout his works, O’Neill developed another form of expression from of universal conflict in man’s nature. Men has two selves—one which he presents to his fellow man—and one which is the real self. In the modern world, O’Neill felt that society through its unnatural laws had forced man into isolation. Man’s primitive, natural self has been condemned as ugly and base. Therefore, man must wear a mask to the world in order to find acceptance. However, either consciously or subconsciously, the inner man is completely overpowered by his outer mask. This outer man, he may be called, seeks material possessions and ultimately becomes proud by his acquisition of these possessions. He fees that he is guiding his own destiny, is reaching out toward fulfilment through his own will to power. In order to do this, however, man must suppress his inner desires—his natural longing to love, to create (sexually and spiritually), to express life. In *The Great God Brown* actual mask are used to show the conflict between the creative artist Dion (which his pan-like mask) and the materialist Billy Brown. In *Strange Interlude* the thought-monologue replaces the mask, and in
Mourning Becomes Electra. O’Neill shows the actual change in the faces of the characters as the conflict progresses.

Of the most significance, however, is O’Neill’s use of the man versus woman conflict to express the life-giving, life-destroying Force behind human existence. This conflict dominates most of his plays in one form or another, and his treatment of women characters is both brutal and conversely sympathetic. Although O’Neill’s attitude toward his women characters does not remain constant throughout his plays, there is a definite progression in his concept of women and their relationship to the protagonist in the plays. From their initial submissiveness in the earlier plays to their dominance in the later plays, women represent the life force to O’Neill.

Broadly speaking, the Man versus Woman conflict is expressed through the Freudian Mother-Father Conflict. The Father image was to O’Neill the indestructible symbol of God the Father—the puritanical force that seeks to crush the life-giving mother through suppression of that entire she stands for. The father is hard and proud; in his pride he thinks himself his creator and possessor. He can make or ruin, create or destroy. His pride, his fatal flaw, seeks to suppress the amoral, submissive life force which is symbolized in the earth mother. In O’Neill’s later plays the father symbolizes death.

The development of the symbolical earth mother, then, may be called the integration of the life force into one character. In O’Neill’s early plays she is the distant, loving, protecting mother to the protagonist. She is the warm, natural expression of life, whether she be a prostitute or the human mother. But as the character of the mother develops, she becomes more than a means for procreating the species. She also becomes the seductress, the impelling life force which draws the protagonist into identifying himself with her in opposing the life-destroying,
suppressive God to Father. She unites in the pagan plays with the wife and mistress and becomes the one woman—the symbol of fertility. However, she is in her fascination to man her own destroyer, for in seeking life man must suffer and struggle, only to lose to God the Father in the end. If man had denied life by allying himself with God the Father, he would not have known this suffering, this struggle.

At last, the Mother in order to defeat the father becomes the destroyer. She takes on necessarily the pride and possessiveness of the Father. She exploits man to gain her own ends. Thus, the life Force in man becomes dually the death force through the mother image, and the only escape for the sufferer is a withdrawal from life to the death of God the Father.

The progressive development of the Mother concept and the Father concept is, of course, revealed through the characters in the plays. The lines between the submissive, protecting Earth Mother, the Earth Mother as mistress as well as Mother combined in the seductress, and the combined Mother-Mistress-Destroyer are not sharply drawn. The variations are sometimes almost indistinguishable. But the progression is toward the portrayal of the woman as destroyer, and as she grows, the Father becomes weaker. O’Neill’s men and women’s characters, as the plays progress, gradually draw from one another their weaker qualities so that toward the last of his plays the protagonist, instead of retreating to the warm protection of the Mother, must find peace with life-denying Father.

To the student of modern drama, O’Neill’s concept of women is most significant when significant when viewed is most significant when viewed in the light of O’Neill’s Strindbergian approach. “Many of Strindberg’s themes are concerned with the eternal battle of the sexes, wherein love (sex) is the blind, enslaving passion of man which destroys man’s higher spiritual ideals. O’Neill’s women grow into this
Strindbergian woman as O’Neill found them increasingly significant in the life of his protagonists”. O’Neill’s women, however, are driven to their roles as Seductress-Destroyer in self-defence. Unlike Strindberg, O’Neill strikes a note of compassion in his treatment of women; and his treatment, although cynical, shows a greater insight into the causes of the conflict, thus making woman a tragic figure rather than simply an instrument by which man is destroyed. Strindberg viewed the battle from the point of view of the tragic protagonist. The student of drama will find an interesting parallel in O’Neill’s view of the tragic heroine in his later plays.

In summary, O’Neill’s characterisation of women from the loving, submissive mother in the early plays to the Mother turned Destroyer in the later plays shows a definite pattern of development in concept and attitude. It is the purpose of this paper to outline this development through a chronological examination of the women characters in eight of O’Neill’s major plays—Beyond the Horizon, Anna Christie, Desire Under the Elms, The Great God Brown, Strange Interlude, and Mourning Becomes Electra.

As it has been stated, to O’Neill, life is “... the one eternal tragedy of man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express his instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression” (Arthur Hobson Quinn, 195). The value of this study of O’Neill’s concept of women, then, lies in its revelation of a crucial aspect of the struggle, for the chief method which O’Neill used to show the conflicting forces within and without the individual was by dramatising the man versus woman conflict. Through the embodiment of the forces of nature in woman, O’Neill sought to show man’s struggle for possessions and self-realisation and against the primitive forces of woman which provoke man’s natural desires to love and create. Therefore, an examination of the development of O’Neill’s concept
of woman from a symbol of submissive love, comfort and hope into a possessive, destructive force against man reveals O’Neill’s growing pessimism about man’s ever achieving any conscious purpose in life. Instead, O’Neill, through the development of his female types concludes that man is doomed from birth to be a victim of the “Force behind,” and woman is the instrument of that Force which draws his toward his inevitable destruction.

It is important to emphasise here that the study is chronological, the plays being examined in the order of their conception, rather than publication. Moreover, plot, technique, theme and character are referred to as a means of aiding the reader to understand the female types developed in the plays.

As the critical background for the present study, all secondary sources containing references to O’Neill women characters have been carefully consulted. Several writers have been of great assistance in developing the ideas embodied in this paper. Through her discussion O’Neill’s conflict between illusion and reality, in Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension Doris Falk has gone for in recognising and analysing O’Neill’s use of the conflict between man and women, especially as found Strange Interlude and Mourning Becomes Electra. Edwin Engel’s discussion of character types in his book The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O’Neill has also been a valuable aid in supplying insight into O’Neill’s concept of women. Special acknowledgement must be given to Sophus Winther’s Eugene O’Neill: A Critical Study. Its general discussion of O’Neill’s works has aided in presenting a broad understanding of all of O’Neill’s characters. The discussion of O’Neill’s life is based on Groswell Bowen’s Curse of the Misbegotten.

It seems evident that women and their relationship to men had special significance for O’Neill. His own life revealed his inability to establish a stable and
satisfying relationship with woman. They dominated his existence, and he knew it. How both loved and hated them for their power over him, and his treatment of the women characters in his plays revealed his conflicting emotions. Whenever women remain passive and giving, O’Neill sympathizes with her plight in life; but when she seeks to posses her man and demands that he, too, must give, O’Neill is brutal toward her. It seems probable, then, that O’Neill’s changing concept of women, as reflected in his plays, derives directly from the experiences of his own troubled life.

As attempt has been made here to unravel O’Neill’s concept of men and women from his full length plays, such as *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1941), *A Touch of the Poet* (1942) and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943) and etc. in chapter II; Chapter III bearing the title ‘O’Neill’s Concept of Women’ is portrayed in O’Neill’s masterpieces, such as *Beyond the Horizon* (1918), *Anna Christie* (1920), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *The Great God Brown* (1925), *Strange Interlude* (1926), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929) and etc., Chapter IV titled ‘O’Neill’s Dramatic Techniques’ is a brief survey of O’Neill’s dramatic techniques and the summing up is done in Chapter V Conclusion sums up the major argument of the thesis. It sketches the lofty thoughts that are scattered throughout O’Neill’s plays. An examination of Eugene O’Neill’s plays in the foregone chapters leads to certain conclusions regarding O’Neill’s concept of men and women. According to O’Neill, men are weaker and isolator; on the other hand, women are Earth Mother, Seductress, and Destroyers.