Chapter - III

Entrapment and Estrangement: Female Archetypes
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ENTRAPMENT AND ESTRANGEMENT: THE FEMALE ARCHETYPES

An analysis of the men and women who move through the dramatic world of O’Neill and Karnad exposes some noteworthy characteristics that many of them have in common. One is inspired by the courage and fortitude with which these individuals face the unfavourable circumstances in the world in which they live. They are determined to give meaning and value to life in a society that is impersonal and unconcerned about the ambitions of human beings. These characters live in two worlds: one is the outer world of physical reality, the other a world of unfulfilled and passionate desire.

O’Neill and Karnad have explored the theme of marriage as a social problem in their writings. It is arduous to dream of a society without this basic correlation between men and women. Yet, this tie is rarely a smooth and easy one. Sustaining such a link is very challenging unless one out of the two is ready to erase his or her identity. The liaison commands compatibility, both on the intellectual and the physical level, a demand that is seldom ever satisfactorily fulfilled.

In this chapter, the exertion is to foreground the dissimilar types of identity for women arising out of the two diverse cultures in terms of twelve distinct plays of O’Neill and Karnad. O’Neill and Karnad begin most of their plays questioning the holiness of nuptial bond. There is hardly any character from their pen who is not indulged or in any way related to extra-marital relationships. In this way, Karnad and O’Neill are the most modern writers to question the age long social institution of marriage. The patrifocal pattern of society has been excellently presented, and more marvellously is portrayed the hunt of the ‘self’ by women in that society. These women pass through a jaunt, having realized the oddities of life, but remain unshaken, unbroken, and unmoved. In their track
they are tossed by the social inhibitions, moral turpitudes and taboos, yet the voyage continues till they reach the state of self-identification. It seems as if the playwrights, step-by-step; allow their female protagonists come out of the ‘man-made castle’ to enjoy the fresh air of self-reverence.

Most of O’Neill’s plays are perturbed with the male characters and their experience, yet he has created strong heroines like Nina Leeds, Lavinia Mannon, Abbie Putnam, and Cybel. O’Neill is a dynamic delineator of women in love. Majority of the female characters are prostitutes, wantons or nymphomaniacs. Though the female characters present no such uniformity that can be found in the male characters, nevertheless, they are emotionally part of the same consciousness and are sexually abnormal. The women in *Thirst*, *The Web*, *Welded*, *TGGB*, *Lazarus Laughed* etc are all prostitutes. The sexual delinquents include characters like Abbie in *DUE*, the heroine of *Welded* and Christine Mannon in *MBE*. Emma Crosby, the heroine in *Diff’rent* and Nina, the leading figure in *SI* are best classified as nymphomaniacs.

Karnad’s female protagonists, on the other hand, belong to the diverse strata of society but they are familiar as far as female sensibility and aspirations are concerned. Chitralekha in *YAY* is a princess married to Pooru, the heir prince. Padmini in *HAY* belongs to a rich merchant family and is espoused to a Brahmin belonging to the upper middle class. Rani in *NAG* happens to be a common village girl and Vishakha in *TFTR* is the wife of a great priest. All these women suffer in one way or the other. Karnad consciously tries to cover the predicament of women in general with the expected socio-economic issues pertaining to their lives. All these female characters are young married women, and are tested to prove their mettle against the dictates of man’s ego. Having enjoyed all sorts of freedom, they perceive themselves in the oddest situation where they find their world of dreams being questioned and identity erased. The emotional set back
they face give them a new force and like the phoenix they once again emerge from their ashes, prove their potential and add a new meaning to their lives.

The majority of the works of O’Neill and Karnad provide vibrant examples of the most mysterious and repressed aspects of the Great Mother archetype. Their works mirror the complexity of the archetypes and reveal how these archetypes of the Terrible Mother, The Earth Mother, The Temptress, and The Unfaithful Wife manifest itself in subtle as well as overt dramatic ways. The theme of Oedipal and Electra complex play a vital role in *MBE*, *DUE*, *YAY* and *BALI*. Abbie marries Ephraim for security, and the same reason goes for Christine. They do not find elation in their marital life, and hence crave for other men. Abbie has an incestuous relationship with her stepson Eben. Christine is in love with Adam Brant and her son Orin. Eben and Adam, in the beginning of the respective plays, hate Abbie and Christine but later it turns out to be real love. Orin and Pooru have a deep infatuation to their mothers. Orin infact kills himself due to the guilt of driving his mother to death.

Women like Chitralekha and Lavinia are rendered as very audacious and even question their male counterparts. Lavinia accuses her mother for murdering Ezra, her father. She drives Orin to kill Adam by which she can revenge her mother. Though she is left desolate in the end, she does not commit suicide, but decides to lead a sequestered life. Chitralekha, on the other hand, dares to cross-question patriarchy. It is she who elevates her voice against Yayati for procuring away her husband’s youth, and goes to the extend of proposing him. It is the hatred of the daughter-in-law to her father-in-law, which is stressed here. In *MBE*, the theme of Electra complex is demarcated effectively. The women in the selected plays have the archetypes of unfaithful wives, seductresses, avengers and victims in them collectively.
Abbie Putnam is introduced in part 1, scene 4 of *DUE*. Abbie’s greed and possessiveness for the farm motivate all her actions. As she enters the house of Ephraim she feels the entire property is her’s and a strong determination of possessiveness can be perceived from her outward appearance. As Simeon and Peter her stepsons have left, the house the only obstacle in her way is young Eben. In her encounter with Eben, she tries to win his sympathy by narrating her story of loneliness and hardship. She says Eben that, “This be my farm-this be my hum-this be my kitchen-!” (226) Her immediate response reveals her greed. She wants to belong and hence identify herself with the farm of Cabot. This sense of belongingness leads her to establish an illegal relationship with Eben. What she needs is an heir of her own through whom she can assert her authority over the farm, and for that purpose, she decides to use Eben as an instrument like a temptress archetype.

Abbie not only personifies the Eternal Earth-Spirit in whom all streams of desire converge, but also a sinister force – both nourisher and destroyer. With the physical union of Eben and Abbie in the room of Eben’s mother, the haunted spirit of his mother returns to her grave.

ABBIE. (with a confident laugh)….This room’s been dead long enuf. Now it’s goin’ t’be my room!

EBEN. (with a strange look) Maw’s gone back t’ her grave. She kin sleep now. (245)

This exposes how Abbie traps Eben. She proceeds in her attempt in getting an heir for her own security and asserts her possession of the room of Eben’s mother.

Abbie, who is the figure of the mother archetype, forms the foundation of the mother complex. She is the first woman with whom Eben comes into contact. Eben, who later becomes conscious of the motive behind her love when a son is born, threatens to
desert her. On the other hand, during the process of seduction, Abbie has desperately fallen in love with him. As she is so deeply appended to him, she cannot convince him that earlier she made love to him for an ulterior purpose. In order to prove that her love for him is neither for the child nor for his inheritance, she kills the child and takes the role of a murderer archetype. By killing the child, Abbie proves that her lust has become love and by unconsciously sharing her crime, Eben achieves the murder of the primordial father. Their mutual sacrifice constitutes a consecration of self hood and the liberation from the clutches of adolescence. The mother and the son belong to each other, so do Eben and Abbie and mark their acceptance of adult life by making themselves free from guilty feelings.

ABBIE. (*shaking her head*) I got t’ take my punishment- t’ pay fur my sin.

EBEN. Then I want t’ share it with ye. (266)

Abbie, the mother mistress, redeems an anthropoid like Eben who is transfigured into a human being by the terrible power of her love. There are critics who have objected to O’Neill’s using of this age-old theme of incest, lust, infanticide, revenge, immortality etc., and transferring them undiluted to the American contemporary stage, to which some of these passions have hardly any relevance. However, one cannot deny the importance of these themes altogether. These emotions are eternal in character, and Karnad has focused the equivalent theme in his play, *YAY*. Though Yayati is married to Devayani, he has a deep relation with Sharmishtha who later becomes his queen.

The play *YAY* shows Yayati as already married to Devayani. Karnad interposes two new characters to the plot – Pooru’s wife, Chitralakha and the maid-confidante, Swarnalata. All the women characters like Devayani, Sharmishtha and Chitralakha become pawns in the game that the male characters play. Sharmishtha has the slave, rebel and the positive mother archetype in her. She is the daughter of the Asura king and
Devayani is the daughter of the Brahmin sage Shukracharya, the royal priest of the asuras. It is apparent from their speech itself that a sort of undeclared war is raging between Devayani and Sharmishtha.

In her answer to Yayati, who is curious to know as to why Sharmishtha had been so vindictive to push Devayani into a well, Sharmishtha elucidates how she had infact worshipped Devayani during the days of their childhood. Devayani had made her feel comfortable in her company and had manifested no discrimination in the matter of Sura-Asura differences. Gradually Sharmishtha had forgotten the dissimilitudes of class and caste and had become affectionate to Devayani. Sharmishtha guarded her friendship zealously and did not tolerate any other Asura girl to be cosy to Devayani. One day they advanced to the lake for a swim. They frolicked around in the water until they were exhausted and lay on the bank to dry their hair. Sharmishtha felt utterly blissful as she lay with her eyes closed, contemplating their perfect friendship. Suddently she perceived Devayani grumbling that their dresses were swapped. Sharmishtha was disturbed and informed Devayani that the beautiful dream of eternal friendship was spoilt. Devayani was furious and called Sharmishtha and her caste as poor people. Such venom from Devayani’s lips was totally unexpected. The insult was intolerable to Sharmishtha and unable to resist her anguish and anger, Sharmishtha dragged Devayani by the hair and pushed her into a dry well. The incident became the genesis of their feud and generated bitterness and gall between them. Yayati rescued Devayani from the well and later married Devayani and to satisfy her demand for revenge, her father sage Shukracharya cursed Sharmishtha to become Devayani’s slave. By such an act, Devayani wanted to prove her superiority over the daughter of the Asura race. The friendship archetype took a negative role from there on. In course of time, Yayati gets infatuated to Sharmishtha and decides to marry her. Devayani would rather free Sharmishtha than allow her to remain in
the palace but Yayati who is driven by his desires does not allow Devayani’s displeasure or anger stop him from making love to Sharmishtha. Devayani leaves the palace and her father in wrath curses that Yayati would become old immediately and thereby lose his virility and youth.

When Pooru proposes that the curse conferred on Yayati should be transformed to him, Sharmishtha tries to dissuade him saying, “No, no, no you can’t. That is utter stupidity! Pooru, the desire for self-sacrifice is a rank perversion”(50). It is Sharmishtha who reminds of his responsibility to his wife. However, Pooru does not desist from his decision, and his wife commits suicide. After the death of Chitralekha, Sharmishtha indicts Yayati for forcing Chitralekha to end her life and she says, “So here is the foundation of your glorious future, your Majesty. A Woman dead, another gone mad, and a third in the danger of her life”(68). She sarcastically calls Chitralekha’s death as “The first martyr to his Majesty’s glorious vision” (69). Yet, Sharmishtha ushers him to the forest in the last scene of the play.

The character of Chitralekha of YAY is Karnad’s creation. Through her, Karnad explores the futility of being born as a princess who finds reality too much to bear. In an interview with Meenakshi Raykar, when Karnad was asked why he has chosen the myth of Yayati, he replied:

I was reading the Mahabharat then. As I was reading Adiparv, I came to the story of Yayati. I read it to a point when Pooru accepts Yayati’s old age. Suddenly a thought came to my mind. If Pooru had a wife how would she react to such a situation? I then invented the character of Pooru’s wife Chitralekha who suffers the consequences of the actions of the others. ¹

When Swarnalatha apprises Chitralekha that Pooru has accepted his father’s old age, she feels proud for being Pooru’s wife. Yet when she espies Pooru’s aged face, she
perceives what has befallen on her. She cries out in panic, “Please don’t come near me.
Go out. Please, please. Don’t touch me …” (58) Chitrlekha curses herself for not being
as great or courageous as her husband, and for turning him away. She entreats Pooru to
reconsider his resolution, and think of his own life and their life together. Yayati ventures
to console and apprises Chitrlekha to behave in a way befitting the daughter-in-law of
the Bharatha family. He pleads her to accept Pooru as he is, and says that her sacrifice
would be remembered with gratitude by the dynasty and be recorded in golden letters in
the annals of history.

When Chitrlekha rebuffs to pay attention to Yayati, he employs his authority as
her father-in-law and as a King. When Yayati requests her to wait for a few years for her
husband to come back to his youth she asks, “Think. And will Your Majesty also think
about how old I shall be by the time that future is attained?”(65) Yayati implores
Chitrlekha to rise above petty considerations, and become a great woman. Chitrlekha,
on the other hand, proposes Yayati. Chitrlekha grasps the role of a warrior who fights for
her needs. She sees Yayati as the man bestowed with masculinity and authority, and
offers herself to Yayati. Karnad said in an interview:

I chose the myth of Yayati and introduced a dialogue between Yayati and
Chitrlekha because I wanted to shock people. People were a bit shocked
But they received the play very well. 2

Yayati rebukes and accuses Chitrlekha for such low thoughts, and she perceives
a sense of incompleteness and a vacuum within herself. She feels meaningless as feminity
finds expression through masculinity and vice versa. Here she becomes a scapegoat
archetype. Chitrlekha seems to be in search of a man, who would define and provide her
some recognition in a society, which is ruled by males. Finding herself in such a plight
she says to Yayati, “…. you have your youth. Prince Pooru has old age. Where do I fit in?” (66)

Chitralekha is a ‘New Woman’ not in the sense that she challenges patriarchy but that she fights against social obligations and moral laws. No daughter-in-law would invite her father-in-law to share the bed with her. As Yayati has absconded the youth of her husband, Yayati has to cater to the emotional satisfaction of Chitralekha. Pooru’s mother on the contrary will have to take into account her own son Pooru as her husband as he has the body of Yayati. Chitralekha views that morality is the fabrication of the human mind and, in this statement, she is very akin to the absurdist and she says to Yayati, “Oh, come sir. These are trite considerations. We have to rise above such trivialities. We have to be superhuman”(66). She becomes a rebel archetype within the male dominated society. She is even greater than Sharmishtha in her revolt and B. V. Karanth’s words deserve mention in this context.

The character of Chitralekha is a very remarkable one. There are only two suicides in the Mahabharatha. Both the suicides are to bring some point to light. The one is of Amba and other of Chitralekha. Chitralekha prefers to kill herself because she has been denied the right of conceiving the would-be prince of the Bharatha dynasty…. ³

Yet in the end, unable to withstand the situation, she commits suicide. Here an innocent girl like her becomes a victim archetype. Her death opens the eyes of Yayati who readily owes the responsibility for all the havoc in the family, and restores the youth to Pooru. Like Chitralekha, Lavinia in MBE too is dejected in life but she is more daring than Chitralekha as she chooses not death but to lead a quarantine life in the house haunted by the Mannon ghosts.
Lavinia, in the beginning demonstrates the characteristics of a wounded child archetype. This archetype holds the memories of the abuse, neglect and other traumas that one has endured during childhood, which has a substantial influence on one’s adult life. The shadow aspect of this archetype manifests a tendency to blame his or her parents for the shortcomings. The wounded child archetype may have the mannerisms of a shadow destroyer. The destroyer generates death, madness, and targets individuals and groups and takes the form of the vampire. One forms a psychic attachment to others because of the desire for their energy, a need to have ‘others’ take care of their survival, and a fear of being abandoned. Patterns of behaviour such as chronic complaining, over dependency and holding on to a relation emotionally or psychically long after it has ended are all indicators of vampire patterns. All these archetypes are combined in Lavinia Mannon, which leaves her as a victim to face the future all alone.

Lavinia Mannon is introduced in Act One of The Homecoming.

*She is twenty three but looks considerably older. Tall like her mother, her body is thin, flat breasted and angular and its unattractiveness is accentuated by her plain black dress. Her movements are stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing. She has a flat dry voice and a habit of snapping out her words like an officer giving orders. But inspite of these dissimilarities, one is immediately struck by her facial resemblance to her mother. She has the same peculiar shade of copper-gold hair, the same pallor and dark violet-blue eyes.... Above all one is struck by the same strange, life like mask impression her face gives repose. But it is evident Lavinia does all in her power to emphasise the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent.* (10)
The hatred between the mother and the daughter is brought out through the description of
the physical features. Though there are affinities with her mother, Lavinia wants to shun it
consciously. O’Neill hints upon this feeling of Lavinia through the discourse between
Lavinia and Peter.

LAVINIA (slowly). I can’t marry anyone, Peter. I’ve got to stay at home. Father needs me.
PETER. He’s got your mother.
LAVINIA (sharply). He needs me more! (14)

O’Neill’s stage direction of the appearance of Christine also vividly portrays the
antagonism between the mother and the daughter. “(Christine Mannon appears from
left... Lavinia sense her presence and whirls around. For a moment, mother and daughter
stare into each other’s eyes. In their whole tense attitude is clearly revealed the bitter
antagonism between them)” (15-16).

Through this, the dramatist clearly depicts about the dearth of emotional bond
between the mother and the daughter. Lavinia doubts the integrity of the mother’s
character and owing to this fact, she chases her mother to New York where Christine has
gone to meet her lover Adam on the pretext of sojourning her ailing father. When Lavinia
informs Christine about the onset of Ezra, she hits upon the fact that her mother is
discontended on hearing the news of her husband’s arrival. In the same scene when Seth,
the gardener identifies the resemblance between Adam and Lavinia’s father and between
brother and grandfather, Lavinia recalls the story of David, the brother of her grandfather
who loved a Canadian nurse named Marie Brantome and married her because she was
with a baby. Her grandfather Abe Mannon drove them out, demolished the house, and
built a new one. The child born to the nurse was none other than Adam.
In Act 2 of Homecoming, the conversation between Lavinia and her mother is rich in psychoanalytical concepts, such as Electra complex, and is felt to be very powerful. Christine’s accusation of Lavinia that she has tried to become the wife of her father and the mother of Orin is an overt statement of Freudian ideas. Lavinia’s motive in ordering her mother to give up Brant is rather a mixed protective concern for her father and eagerness to keep the family prestige intact. This highly complex psychology makes Lavinia one of the most interesting characters in the tragedy. Her confrontation with her mother leads the action forward, as it drives Christine to desperation and gives to her the dimly felt desire of eliminating Ezra. When Ezra turns up home from the war, Lavinia wants to procure him away from Christine.

LAVINIA. …. *(She comes and kisses him –excitedly.)* Oh, I’m so happy
You’re here!... You’re then only man I’ll ever love! I’m going to stay with you! *(50-51)*

When Ezra and Christine are conversing in the night of the General’s ‘Homecoming’ Lavinia’s heart is filled with anguish. Lavinia states to Ezra that she does not feel sleepy and invites him for a walk but Ezra replies that he does not have time. Her emotion and her dialogue is beautifully expressed by O’Neill *(The door closes behind them. Lavinia stands staring before her- then walks stiffly down the steps and stands again. .... She looks up.)*

LAVINIA. *(in an anguish of jealous hatred)*. I hate you! You steal even
Father’s love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! *(Then almost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands.)* Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done to you?

*(56-57)*
With all her efforts, she tries to keep her mother away from Adam for the reputation of her father. This makes the tie between the daughter and the mother bitter. The long drawn war of possession for Ezra between Christine and Lavinia ends with the murder of Ezra by the former. The death of her father is a terrible blow on Lavinia as her conception of security and belongingness is shattered. She remembers the last words of her father before his death. “She’s guilty- not medicine!” (63) Lavinia questions her mother as to what he meant. Christine replies that she is unaware, and asks if Lavinia wants to accuse her of murdering Ezra. Christine then falls in a dead faint at the foot of the bed and the poison is stretched out behind her. As her hand strikes the floor, her fingers relax and the box slips out into one of the hooked rugs. Lavinia describes the box and detects her mother’s guilt. With her arms on her father’s corpse she cries, “Father! Don’t leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!” (64)

The death of Lavinia’s father makes her take the role of an avenger archetype. She is driven by not only the Mannon sense of justice and her love for her father, but also by her frustrated love for Adam and deep hatred to her mother. Since Christine has taken the love of both men from Lavinia, the best way to take revenge is not to take her mother’s life, but that of Adam, Christine’s lover. At Lavinia’s instigation, Orin murders Adam and unable to bear this, Christine strips off her own life. The death of Christine causes a threat to Lavinia’s possession on Orin as he slowly drifts to insanity.

Lavinia anticipates mitigating the pain of isolation by marrying Peter but fails miserably in her endeavour. In spite of her desire to marry Peter, she discounts the proposal. She realizes that Mannons have no right to love or to be loved in this world. She determines to spend the remaining days of her life in the isolated house of Mannons.

LAVINIA (grimly). …. I’m not going the way Mother and Orin went.

That’s escaping punishment. …. I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to
punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worth act of justice than death or poison! I’ll never go out or see anyone! I’ll have the shutters nailed close so no sunlight can ever get in. I’ll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out… die. (178)

Arthur and Barbara Gelb view in their book, O’Neill

“Lavinia (… symbolic representation of O’Neill himself) loses in rapid succession (and in the same order as O’Neill) first her father, then her mother, then her brother… Finally Lavinia condemns herself to a life locked away from the world bound as she declares, “to the Mannon dead” - as O’Neill felt himself bound to and haunted by his own dead. “Iam the last Mannon” (echoes) O’Neill’s mournful cry to a friend soon after Jamie’s death, “I’m the last of the O’Neill’s!”

The Gelbs add,

“although Lavinia is a woman, she is in many ways one of the most revealing characters O’Neill ever created, and her final speech is one of the most soul-baring O’Neill ever wrote; it incorporates both his consuming preoccupation with the act of suicide and his mordant belief in the inevitability of an even crueler punishment.”

Comparing Lavinia with Nina of SI Harry Slochower states,

“In Nina and Lavinia, O’Neill presents the ultimate in self and social alienation. Both are the masochistic products of modern rationalistic probing. Both attempt to wield and possess people’s lives, as if they were “god and had created them.”Nina renounces at the end. Lavinia remains defiant even in her acceptance of suffering.”
O’Neill envisioned his own fate in these words of Lavinia, “It takes the Mannon to punish themselves for being born!” (178).

O’Neill and Karnad in all these plays focus on mother complex, and the mother archetype includes both the positive and the negative shades. Christine in MBE has in her a devouring, abusive and abandoning mother archetype whereas Swarnalatha in YAY has the positive aspect of this archetype. In Christine, the author has synthesized the archetypes of an unfaithful wife, temptress, murderer and victim archetype. She is unfaithful to her husband and an unpleasant mother to her children. She hates her daughter, but loves her son too much and wants to possess him. Joining hands with Adam, she becomes a murderer archetype causing the death of her husband. Killing one’s husband to live with the man one loves is an ever-contemporary theme.

The greatest agony in Christine’s life is that she is the wife of a man she hates. In search of security, she marries Ezra just like Abbie in DUE. Instead of getting a loving husband, she finds a cold-hearted person in him. Her marriage turns romance into disgust, and she gets separated from her husband mentally. She accuses her husband, “Not your wife! You acted as if I were your wife – your property” (60). Neglected by her husband, she gradually turns towards her son Orin to fill the vacuum. Christine finds herself in the same state of loneliness after Orin joins the army. Christine lost the motherly affections towards Lavinia and she considers her as a competitor in the war of possession. She accuses Lavinia, “… You’ve tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You’ve always schemed to steal my place!” (33)

The hostility reaches the climax when Lavinia discovers her mother’s illicit relation with Adam Brant. When Orin’s love is snatched from her, Christine has nothing in her life except hate and a desire to revenge. She meets Adam and reciprocates his love knowing his parentage and his evil design. Adam Brant has fallen in love with Christine
because he associates her with his mother, Marie. When Ezra returns and questions Christine about Adam she lies to him and utters that the Captain has been coming for Lavinia.

Ezra tells Christine the agonizing tale of his woeful life he has experienced in the war for which she replies that she cannot comprehend what he is talking. It is akin to the words of Abbie in *DUE* and that of the young guard in *TUG*. At a stage, Ezra expresses his apprehension that Christine is waiting for his death. Ezra goes on nagging her and ultimately Christine confesses that she loves Adam whom she finds gentle and tender—everything Ezra has never been. For Ezra this is a bolt from the blue, a naked truth which he cannot withstand. He has a fit of heart trouble and Christine, who is the Clytemnestra in this play, administers the poisonous pellet on him given by Adam. For the sake of her love, she can obliterate all ethics from her conscience.

In Christine, it is evident that there are no moral scruples. In fact, ‘morality’ is something put forward by the society, which an individual has to stick on to until the end. She is shrewd in making her own daughter flirt with Adam as she assumes that Lavinia may not grow suspicious of her mother’s affair with him. She does not care for the future of her own son and daughter, and is ready to desert them to join Adam in matrimony as she can take her share of the Mannon estate. When she fears that Lavinia would report to the cops that she (Christine) has poisoned Ezra, she entreats Orin to stop Lavinia from doing so because Adam would also be tried as her accomplice. She takes the whole responsibility on her shoulder and tries to save the life of her lover like Vishakha of *TFTR*.

After murdering Adam, Orin returns home and tries to console his mother by his affection. He castigates her for loving Adam a ‘servant’s bastard’, who gets her under his impact to take his mother’s revenge on Ezra. Orin finds that she is still under the
influence of her lover. Lavinia holds that Adam has paid the penalty and suggests that Christine can ‘live’. The word ‘live’ stings her. She glares at Lavinia, as if that is the last insult and utters with strident mockery “Live!” (123) O’Neill further writes about her expressions, “(she bursts into shrill laughter, stops it abruptly raises her hands between her face and her daughter and pushes them out in a gesture of blotting Lavinia for ever from her sight. Then she turns and rushes into the house)” (123). After a few moments, she shoots herself. Like Christine, even Devayani has the negative shades of the mother archetype.

Devayani is the queen and she exercises authority on Swarnalatha her maid and Sharmishtha her slave. She is arrogant to Sharmishtha and orders her to vacate the palace as she is acquainted with the fact that Sharmishtha, her intimate friend has turned to be her rival. When she understands that her title as the Queen should be shared with Sharmishtha, she becomes egocentric. She quits the palace like a rebel breaking her ‘Mangal Shutra’. She is the amalgamation of a shadow friend, shadow Queen and shadow mother-in-law archetype. Though Devayani has only a minor role to play, the story cannot proceed without her as it is due to Devayani that her father curses and brings about Yayati’s downfall. Like Devayani, there are characters like Mildred of *THA*, the Old Native Woman of *TEJ* and the Step-Mother of *TUG* whose role in the play is only subsidiary, but the impact brought out by them is tremendous. They turn out to be the backbone of the plays and most of them act as a catalyst archetype.

The opening scene of the play *TEJ* introduces the old native woman dressed in cheap calico, a bandana wrapped round her head, carrying a bundle at the end of a stick over her shoulders and moving stealthily in the audience chamber of the palace. Silhouetted against this background, she creates a tense atmosphere arousing the curiosity of the audience to a sense of foreboding at the start of the play itself. The silence adds to
the mystery. She does not voice the motive of her visit at that time to Smithers, though she is aware that the emperor is at his afternoon nap. In abject fear, she cringes when confronted by Smithers and pleads to let her go. She gives the tip-off that all the men have gone to the hills, a message of doom for the Emperor. She escapes swiftly from the scene to join her people in the hills. It is from her that the audience grasp what is going to happen. There is an instant beginning and O’Neill, unlike Shakespeare; does not give a chance for the viewers to warm up to watch what is going to happen. Just like the old woman in TEJ even Mildred in THA, though appears only in two scenes, has an important errand to play. She too is a catalyst archetype.

Mildred represents the spoilt child archetype. She is the emissary of children of fortune who are arrogant, and who do not have leniency on others. This is revealed through her language, behaviour and mannerisms. From her aunt it is exposed that Mildred who has dabbled in Sociology at College has anthropological interests and enjoys a morbid thrill for social service work in the slums of New York’s East Side. She has proposed a visit to the bottom of the ship, the stokehole to ascertain the working circumstances of the fireman and the stokers. When her aunt declares that they can hire an army of detectives to investigate whatever she wants to perceive, Mildred replies, “(protesting with a trace of genuine earnestness) Please do not mock my attempts to discover how the other half lives” (219).

Mildred is sharp tongued in her denunciation of her own ancestors, and her aunt calls her a ‘poser’. She has no compunctions about telling lies to the Second Engineer as having been permitted by her father to visit the bottom of the ship and of the supposed letter from her father, which was never been written. To the Engineer’s warning that her white dress will go soiled getting down the deck alleys and ladders, she retorts that she
will cast it away in the sea as she has fifty such. She is wilful and has scant respect for the authority.

Mildred states to her aunt that the Engineer is an oaf, a fool but all the same a virile one. She is flippant with the Second Engineer when he announces that he is waiting for the fourth Engineer to join them in escorting her to the grimy, sooty, dirty hot stokehole. She angrily enquires if it is because he does not care to shoulder the responsibility of escorting her alone. That she is equipped with an uncontrollable vicious temper is evident from her slapping her aunt across her face, for calling her again ‘poser’. She is full of wanton mischief, artifice and calculated disdain.

The crucial scene in the play befalls when Mildred is face to face with the half-naked raw brutal Yank in the stokehole. His snarling, murderous growl, crouching to spring, his lips drawn back over his teeth, his small eyes gleaming ferociously have a paralysing effect on her personality. She looks at his face, and the eye-to-eye confrontation has an appalling terrible impact on both. Dressed all in white like an apparition, in the full light of the opened door of the stokehole with the two Engineers beside her, she petrifies Yank who is transformed into a stone. She is the Medusa archetype who has exorcised Yank. Her expression is incredible. O’Neill writes:

“As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry, and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own.” (226)

Mildred collapses exclaiming, “Take me away. Oh! The filthy beast!” (226) and thereafter she takes a new impersonal role in the psyche of Yank. Her character unfolds the perverted contradictions of her class; on one hand white as a symbol, on the other she is the Goddess of steel turning Yank’s proud manhood to stone. Like Mildred, her aunt
too is the symbol of aristocracy. The Aunt personifies the lifestyle of the upper class. She represents people who are vicious enough to hide their follies.

O’Neill has created the aunt as a character with the specific object of generating out the traits of Mildred. She is acting as a chaperon to Mildred on the ship. Mildred converses with her of her great-grandmother having smoked clay-pipes, a reference to her vulgarly poor origin. The Aunt reprimands Mildred for acting like a ghoul, excavating old graves. She has a reverence for the memory of the dead. Mildred retorts that the Aunt reminds her of “a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth in the kitchen” (218). They hate each other but for the sake of appearances, the aunt reminds Mildred that they should patch up and settle down to an armed truce. She has no objections to Mildred indulging in any sort of eccentricity as long as she observes the decorum of her class of super-rich. The Aunt is represented as an artificial figure, inert and out of harmony. She is highly critical of sociological values and Mildred’s bluntness about her ancestors. It is only she who advices Mildred and in the same way it is only the Stepmother in TUG who questions, criticises and warns Tughlaq.

The Stepmother in TUG, whose name is not mentioned, is evidently the second wife of Muhammed’s father. She is the only woman character in the play, and is introduced in the second scene when Muhammad is crowing over with pleasure at having sorted out an onerous chess problem. She is worried about his personal matters and asks him, “I was worried about your late nights. These days you never seem to go to bed at all. I just wanted to know why?” (10) He responds that it is for the reason that he has so many glorious ideas seething in his mind but is unable to get a root among the people. The Stepmother calls him a ‘pompous ass’ to waste his time over imaginary things and not deal with the reality.
Muhammad points out that he is unlike other kings who died senile in their youth. The word ‘murder’ shatters the Stepmother as it strikes a chord of the so-called accident in the pavilion. Muhammad calmly says that while his mother, the Amirs and others in the court consider him a murderer, he does not expect his Stepmother to rely on the gossip. When Muhammad marches away with his army to confront Ain-ul-Mulk, he leaves Barani as the Stepmother’s companion and Shihab-ud-Din as the de-facto manager of state affairs. The Stepmother is fond of Barani and requests him not to desert Muhammad under any circumstance. She is convinced that Najib plays a negative role in the life of the Sultan. She says to Barani that, if Najib goes on like that she herself would murder him. After the war when Muhammad goes to meet Najib initially instead of meeting, his Stepmother she seems to be frustrated. The stage direction reveals it where the Step-Mother says, “But I can’t understand it. Why didn’t he send word he was coming? Why this secrecy? (26) This shows her excess love for Muhammad with a strain of Oedipal twist in it.

The Stepmother is valiant enough to ask Tughlaq about the affairs of the state – of the counterfeit coins. Besides this, she is disturbed that the Amirs and Khans are getting upset as he is hounding them about the death of Najib. The Stepmother discloses that she is content that Najib is dead, as he was inducing Muhammad astray. Muhammad is adamant and bursts out that if the Amirs are powerless to unearth about the death of Najib, their families would be in distress. For this reaction the Stepmother replies, “You frighten me, Muhammad, you really do please stop this. Muhammad – please for my sake”(65). When she asserts she had murdered Najib, Muhammad cannot distinguish whether she is bantering or not. She concedes that she got Najib killed, as he was culpable for the downfall – both of the Sultan and his empire.
Muhammad on the other hand views that the Stepmother wanted Najib out of the way because she felt that he was a usurper of Muhammad’s love, which should have flown in her direction. Muhammad senses this and deprives to be enslaved by a woman’s will, however fond she may be of him, which is evident from his speech.

MUHAMMAD: Woman, Woman, so you are also one of them! So that’s what you wanted! Mother is annoyed she can’t control me. And now you too are trying the same genre; aren’t you? Get rid of Najib, so you control me? (66)

The Stepmother replies that she wants nothing for herself. He condemns her to be stoned to death publicly, which is the punishment in the Islamic code for an adulteress. As she has denounced him, she is worse than an adulteress.

MUHAMMAD: The others died unjustly. You deserve to die-

(Two soldiers enter)

You are worse than an adulteress. But I can’t think of a worse punishment for you. Take her to prison. (67)

Love turns in Muhammad’s eccentric brain into unqualified hatred. In an interview, Karnad was asked whether he had any sexual connotation in his mind when he invented the character of the Stepmother, he replied: “No. The readers found sexual connotations. It was a mere accident. Tughlaq had stoned his Stepmother to death for adultery and he revered his own mother. I combined these two to create the character of the stepmother.”7

Like the Stepmother in TUG, the Queen Mother in BALI also has a deep love and concern for her son. This creates a spar between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law. In BALI, NAG and SI the man-woman relationship is of great importance. In BALI, the Queen is married yet is attracted to the voice of a mahout. In NAG, Rani
acquires warmth and affection not from her husband but from Naga, the serpent lover. In SI, Nina is in love with Gordon but their affair cannot be consummated and hence she feels isolated. In all these plays, the reader encounters married couples but their marriages are mockeries. The failure of these marriages affects the lives of not only the couples but also others.

Karnad’s NAG pries deeper and deeper into the existential problem of women who suffer from the loss of identity and isolation in patriarchal society. Rani who has suffered a lot due to the indifferent and barbaric behaviour of her husband, Appanna, challenges the decadent social order of male hegemony, and regains her identity and just place through rebellion. NAG is the story of Rani – the story of a woman who is visited by a cobra at night when her husband is busy with his mistress. Rani, the protagonist in NAG, epitomizes the woman who evolves from an innocent homesick and lonely bride to a young woman asserting her rights and lives happily ever after in a male dominated society. Rani signifies the single-child archetype. She is pampered by her parents and is married to a rich man. She becomes a victim in the hands of her dominating husband. She does not revolt and hence becomes a scapegoat archetype. This archetype suffers at the shortcomings of others and is blamed regardless of whether he or she is actually at fault. The scapegoat is linked with the slave archetype where one has to follow orders unconditionally.

THE STORY, personified as a woman character along with The FLAMES (all female characters), introduces Rani to the audience as:

STORY: A young girl. Her name … it doesn’t matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani. Queen. Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long tresses. For when her hair was tied up in
a knot, it was as though a black Cobra lay curled on the nape of her
neck, coil upon glistening coil. (6)

The author puts in the symbolic reference of King Cobra at the beginning itself. In
the cessation, she conceals the Cobra in her tresses. The end of the play is signified in the
instigation itself. Her husband takes Rani to his house only to lock her up there. Her
unbearable loneliness makes her weave stories about herself that gives vent to the deepest
longings. These fantasies and dreams expose her psychological development that is the
unconscious aspect of her personality. At first, her deepest wish is to go back to her
parents. Rani dreams and asks him: "Where are you taking me?" And the Eagle answers:
'Beyond the seven seas and the seven isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden. And
in that garden stands the tree of emeralds. Under that tree, your parents wait for you’’(7).
This dream is rich in archetypal imagery of seven seas, garden and trees. The figure
'seven' is the most potent of all symbolic numbers signifying perfect order, and sea is the
mother of all life- of timelessness and eternity. On that Seventh Island is the garden with
a tree. The garden is the archetype of the Feminine principle of balance, harmony and
innocence. The tree signifies the Male principle. It is said that Rani sleeps between her
father and mother. She has grown up merely to presume the personality of her mother. In
the second daydream, she awakes to find a stag with golden antlers at the door calling out
to her but she declines to go. This could be analysed as the rich husband trying to take her
away.

Rani is put behind the lock like a caged bird lest she would have got a company to
abate her suffering. Rani here is a representative of millions of such victims in our
society. Karnad raises a question about the attitude of a typical male towards his wife and
appears to ask how fair it is then to talk about democratic values and egalitarianism. Rani
has a sense of isolation and claustrophobia within the four walls of the eternal hell. She
supplicates Kurudavva to inform her parents of her pathetic plight and liberate her from the prison. When Kurudavva identifies that there is no physical union in Rani-Appanna relationship, she affords her with two roots. Rani blends the paste to the curry but as it turns red and looks sinister, she pours it in the anthill in front of the house.

A King Cobra called Naga devours the aphrodisiac paste and falls in love with Rani. When Naga appears, the image of the play also alters gradually. Naga represents a cultural leader who is instrumental in bringing about a socio-cultural reform. He simulates the form of Appanna and visits Rani at night. He takes concern on Rani for her pathetic condition and showers parental warmth on her. Rani cannot comprehend the situation since Appanna cannot be so affectionate and compassionate. Yet she willingly suspends her disbelief and enjoys the concern and tenderness of Naga who is in the guise of Appanna. She feels happy and secure in his company but her dream is devasted when she meets the real Appanna the next morning. On seeing him, Rani comes laughing intending that her hardships have ended as Appanna has transformed for the better, but learns that she is wrong to think so.

Though she is accustomed to Naga’s nightly visits in the guise of Appanna, she suspects whether the same Appanna who regards her with cold contempt in the daytime is the one who makes love so tenderly at nights. Naga assures her that what she sees is real, and not a figment of her imagination. Yet knowing that his identity would be revealed, Naga subdues her reason by using patriarchal authority.

    NAGA: (Seriously.) I am afraid that it is how it is going to be. Like that during the day. Like this at night Don’t ask me why?
    RANI: I won’t. (23)

This illustrates how men of patriarchal culture overpower the intellect of woman and how their ignorance gives men the autonomy of doing whatever they like. Rani is naive
about sex, and when Naga initiates her into it she says, “What will father and mother say if they come to know?” (25) Naga is not poignant because her pregnancy would expose his identity. Far from being happy at the news, he is glum and serious. She blames him for being so ‘cold-blooded’ that she becomes dubious whether he is human at all. Naga asks her to keep the fact of her pregnancy a secret as long as she can and not to question him. She becomes a confident and daring lady.

RANI: I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don’t you take it on trust that I have the mind and explain charade to me? Why do you play these games? (32)

The image of the New Woman has emerged here. She dares to probe direct questions and wants to comprehend of why he is playing games with her. When Appanna learns of his wife’s pregnancy he beats and kicks her around, and calls her a ‘whore’ as he has not slept with her even once. Nevertheless, he complains to the Village Elders of Rani’s adultery and infidelity. Rani cannot understand this schizophrenic behaviour when Naga soothes and comforts her to opt for the snake ordeal. He says that she should swear by holding the King Cobra from the nearby anthill instead of going in for the ordeal by holding a red-hot-iron in her hand or by putting it in boiling oil. “There is no other way,” (34) he tells her and she must tell the truth.

During the trial, the cobra slide up her shoulders and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head. It sways its hood gently for a while, moves over her shoulders like a garland, slides down and goes into the anthill. Rani true to the ‘pativritha’ archetype brings about a transformation in the heart of Appanna. The influence of the archetype on an individual is clearly seen, and is sustained in the cultural and mythic consciousness of the individual.
In the final denouement, during the snake ordeal, Rani clearly proclaims that the only two men who ever touched her are her husband and Naga. After the ordeal, Naga’s route of entry into and the exit from Rani’s home is sealed off. After having ensured his lover’s safety and being madly in love as he was, the only way left for Naga is to commit suicide. Therefore, he determines to put an end to his life by entangling himself in Rani’s long tresses. A folktale and a myth must end on a pleasant note, not only for the protagonists but for the spectators too. The supreme sacrifice by Naga, so that Rani can live happily ever after, wins him accolades from the audience. Seen as a symbol, the death of the Cobra may indicate that Rani has conquered her secret urgings of the flesh and has achieved total marital harmony with her husband. However, that hard-won harmony is short-lived. Before long, her head feels hefty by the pull of a little cobra. It actually stands for a new beginning. There is no such a thing as total harmony in man-woman relationship. Elements of discontent, unfulfilled desires and aspirations, unequal demands made by each other, are stillborn and reborn. The Naga and the tiny cobra grow into symbols for all those differences between the male and female principles. They never converge to one harmonious whole, but always tend to diverge. As the play closes, Rani attains that sustaining balance by learning to contain the tension between these irreconcilable opposites. It will be a constant strain, yet she is resolved to manage it. She volunteers to bear the burden and invites the little Cobra to get into her hair.

RANI: Now stay there. And lie still. You don’t know how heavy you are.
Let me get used to you, will you. (45)

This reveals the great sacrificial role played by the women in our families for the cultural survival. It has made the critics call Naga-Mandala a feminist play because Karnad has turned the traditionally male-oriented folktale by making Rani affirm herself and acknowledge the Cobra as her lover through whom she has gained fulfilment in life.
By doing so, she has also exploded the myth of chastity. Rani’s predicament poignantly exhibits the human need to live by fictions and half-truths. In the end, Rani hides the live Cobra within her tresses and says, “This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in their happily, forever”(46). With these words, she “lifts the baby up. Starts feeding it”(46). Rani’s final action does not make her a wicked figure, but a true Goddess of her calling, who bears all burdensome differences in secret suffering and sustains the race. In a joint family or even in the western style nuclear families, the woman and her capacity to bear lifelong burdens – her God given sacrificial devotion to the family – keep it intact from falling apart. It is not in vain that Rani is acclaimed as Goddess in the play.

In Nina of *SI* there is an amalgamation of the archetypes of Femme Fatale, flirt, seductress and enchanter all in the negative shades yet in the end, she takes the role of the positive Great Mother Archetype. Nina is the wounded child archetype like Lavinia of *MBE*. As she is not allowed to enter into wedlock with Gordon, she becomes a rebel and takes the role of an avenger archetype. She turns into a seeker archetype, filled with hope to have pleasures in life. She grows to be a Femme Fatale, by marrying Sam and by having relation with Darrell. She becomes an unfaithful wife archetype, by begetting a son of Darrell. In the end, she has the characteristics of Woman (with a capital W) to symbolize the Earth Spirit. She develops into Mother Nature or Great Mother like Cybel, the prostitute of the same play. Here, she takes the role of a philosopher, revealing the realities of life.

*SI* is the longest play ever written by O’Neill. It is a powerful presentation of man’s search for identity, belief and belonging. Nina’s first appearance as a young rebel in her father’s home is in a characteristically negative light. Through the discourse between Charles Marsden and Professor Leeds, it is evident that Nina has lost her fiancée and is shattered. There is no warmth in her relationship with her father and it is put
forward through the appearance of Nina. The puritanical restraint imposed by her father prompts her to defy him. In her defiant outbursts to her father, there seems to be nothing but the instinct of protest. The thought that he has curbed her to make Gordon happy before his death makes her decide to have her own way.

NINA: …. I must learn to give myself … give and give until I can make the gift of myself for a man’s happiness without scruple, without fear, without joy except in his joy! When I’ve accomplished this I’ll have found myself. I’ll know how to start in living my own life again. (500)

In her monologue, there is something of a positive vision. She wants to make others delighted and find elation in their joy and incidentally to ‘find’ herself. Her subsequent career bears out this statement although she seems to turn possessive and overbearing in the later part of the play. Her longing to be the mother of Gordon’s baby leaves her in a state of isolation. Life becomes meaningless for her.

The sense of security, which Nina has lost, is never restored. Her first effort as a nurse proves to be futile, but her quest for belonging never ends as a seeker archetype. Darrel says to Marsden, “Nina has been giving way more and more to a morbid long for martyrdom” (517). He stresses that her craving for sacrifice is born of a sense of misery. To appease her longing to belong, she determines to marry Sam Evans on the advice of Darrell and Marsden. Both the well-wishers of Nina believe that marriage is the only solution to her predicament. After her marriage to Sam, she somehow tries her best to regain her lost sense of security through her baby, who is still in her womb. She says, “… Oh, I hope it is a boy… healthy and strong and beautiful… like Gordon! …” (532-33). It evokes that Gordon is not only a man for her but is the insignia of her security, and her identity. However, the aspired conviction for which she longs is shattered to pieces when Sam’s mother reveals the family curse of insanity.
MRS.EVANS: … Only remember it’s a family secret, and now you’re one of the family. It’s the curse on the Evanses. My husband’s mother-she was an only child—died in an asylum and her father before her. … And my husband’s sister, Sammy’s aunt she’s out of her mind. She lives on the top floor of this house, hasn’t been out for years, I’ve taken care of her. … Most people around here were afraid of Evanses inspite of their being rich for hereabouts. They knew about the craziness going back, I guess, for heaven knows how long. (541)

The cruel fate strikes another blow when Mrs. Evans forces Nina for an abortion and recommends her to get a baby from somebody else instead of Sam. The plea of Mrs. Evans makes a turning point in Nina’s career. While sacrificing her happiness for making Mrs. Evans and her son elated, she develops a moral conviction that being buoyant oneself is also necessary. Though she does not love Sam, she resolves to make him happy. Making many adjustments through interludes of jubilation and pain she enjoys certain moments in the course of the play, – only moments. The rest is tension and pain. This is perhaps the broad concept of O’Neill in creating Nina to interpret human life as an interlude of affliction in which human beings search for instants of happiness.

To give mental satisfaction as well as security, Nina requires a baby by any means. Her cryptic arrangement with Darrel to have a child is her exertion to regain her lost joyfulness without causing unhappiness to her husband. Darrell is intrigued by Nina’s obsession with pleasure. Owing to his pressing desire for her, he is mesmerized to prescribe himself scientifically for the sexual act just like Paravasu in TFTR. On the other hand, Nina considers her illicit affair as a remedy like her previous effort as a nurse.

NINA: … Of picking out a healthy male about whom she cared nothing
and having a child by him that Sam would believe was his own child, 
whose life would give him confidence in his own living, who would be 
for him a living proof that his wife loved him. (567)

Though her prophecy about Sam proves fruitful, she fails to play her own part. She no longer remains trustworthy to her husband and becomes an unfaithful wife archetype. Remembering their sexual act, she is inclined towards Darrell. The never-ending process reaches a state where she considers Sam a bogus man and Darrell everything to her. Sexual relation seems to be the principle reason behind her despondency, which she fails to bridge due to the crevice between her and the men she encounters. When she dwindles to give herself to her fiancé, she has a conflict with her father and becomes an alien daughter and for the sake of Darrell she wants to forsake Sam. Nina proposes to Darrell, but he rebuffs her and determines to depart to Europe. Nina makes up her mind to avenge Darrell for deserting her, and instead of breaking down, she ponders to manipulate Sam as an instrument of reprisal. She desires her husband Sam as well as her lover Darrell and wants both to be happy. When Darrell returns from Europe, he finds Nina with his baby. He decides to reveal to Sam about his relation with Nina, but Nina dissents to which Darrell asks, “You mean – I can be – your lover again?” (612) Nina replies that it is the only solution. Nina possesses a power to synthesize the life-energies of the men nearest to her. The desires of three men integrate into her.

NINA. My three men! … I feel their desires converge in me! …

To form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb
… and am whole … they dissolve in me, their life is my
life … I am pregnant with the three! … husband! … lover!
… father! … and the fourth man!… little man!… little Gordon!
… he’s mine too! … that makes it perfect! … (616)
The focus of the drama shifts to the mental landscape of Nina and the tremendous costs she has paid. She wishes to tell Evans of her liaison with Darrell, and even to elope with Darrell. She feels more strongly bound to her choice which conflicts with her quest of personal happiness. She then turns to her son and craves to possess him. Darrell who is then without desire or jealousy wonders how she has ever been his mistress. Nina has realized that their love is the most insecure foundations where there is no place for happiness. ‘Love, passion and ecstasy’ all have sustained her in turn and all have been ebbed. The present in which one lives and acts is only an illusion, a brief interlude in which all sorts of strange things happen. The current of passion, which carried her through love, has drained away, and only the dregs of bitterness are left.

Gordon, Nina’s son has grown into an exact image of the dead Gordon. Darrell, his biological father, understands that Gordon embodies the myth, which Nina associated with the dead Gordon, and he wants it to be exploded. Gordon, the son, is the ideal mythical hero in perfect parody doomed to win always and flies away from the cosmic spider-web built by Nina. When little Gordon grows up and joins hands with Madeline and flies off leaving her alone, Nina realizes the futility of maternity.

**NINA.** My having a son was a failure, wasn’t it? He couldn’t give me happiness. Son’s are always their fathers. They pass through their mother to become their father again. The Sons of the Fathers have all been failures. (681)

In Nina’s trying to obsess the love of her son, the dramatist brings the wheel to a full circle. Nina is back in the position of her father. She wants to retain her son’s love for her happiness as her father had tried to retain her’s for him. Each can do so by preventing a match. But in the case of Nina, she is even less successful in securing her bliss in this way. Darrell refuses to cooperate in interfering with the lives of others. He knows this to
be responsible for all the sufferings. So, Nina’s quest for gaiety which began as a reaction against parental interference ends with her own futile intervention. Nina’s ultimate failure secures a tragic dignity – a sort of epic grandeur – due to her long and painful struggle to control her fate and circumstances and her sacrifice to give happiness to others. This complexity – possessiveness and sacrifice, egoism and self-effacement – make her character engaging and her quest symbolic of the human quandary. Nina’s bitterness at seeing her dream finally splintered is typical of all those who get nothing for immolating themselves to see others happy.

As Nina’s defeat concludes, she recollects how she is ushered into it by her father and how she has inherited this possessiveness from him. She says, “And I forgive you, Father. It was all your fault in the beginning wasn’t it? You mustn’t ever meddle with human lives again!” (661-62). One of O’Neill’s vision is illusions or dreams can be a source of happiness. He was pre-occupied with the idea and gave it a central place in his subsequent plays. The interlude ends with the abandonment of the quest, which is incapable of accomplishing. Nina has always dreamt of love and happiness. The death of her real lover, her horrible experience as a nurse, her tragic marriage with Sam, her physical and emotional involvement with Darrell and her failure to keep her son Gordon—all her encounters with reality crumble her till she becomes the ghost of the former self. She can be neither a lover nor a wife or a mother.

In the evening of her life, Nina is forsaken. She is so drained and exhausted emotionally that she wants a security in which, she may find her lost sense of belonging, for which she has been struggling throughout her life. Finally, she opts to marry Marsden, her silent lover to end her long journey of insecurity. She mulls over life as merely a strange dark interlude in the electrical display of God, the Father. Much of this play can be seen as a dramatic version of O’Neill’s theories of love and sex. Nina’s sense of life
enhancing oneness with creation is an echo of Schopenhaur’s assertion that sexuality is an expression of the race’s will to live—what Nietzsche preferred to call a ‘will to power.’ O’Neill seems to share Schopenhaur’s conviction expressed in The Ages of Life that when passion is extinguished, the true kernel of life is gone and nothing remains but the hollow shell. In SI, employing the stream of consciousness technique, O’Neill places a woman in a plexus of relationships to trace the various facets of his characters, as a daughter, mistress, wife and mother. Her responses in different situations are her futile attempts to find fulfillment.

The play BALI also deals with the existential problem – the suppression and exploitation of women. Queen Amritmati rebels like Rani, against the defunct social order and attains peace in the sacrifice or ‘Bali’ of her own life. The character Queen Amritamati of BALI has affinity to that of Nina as both have extra-marital relationship. BALI delineates the bestial attraction of a woman to a man. Karnad, for the first time has boldly attacked the invulnerable borderline of the marital bond. The play takes its plot from a seventeenth century Jain work, ‘Yashodhara Charithe’. Though the basic task of the play is the concept of sin, the male-female relation is wonderfully portrayed. The queen is riveted towards the voice of the elephant tamer, Astavakra and this fascination shift from his voice to his manly smell. The King considers this as a sin and his Mother decides repentance for the same.

Queen Amritmathi in the play has the blend of a seeker, adulteress, unfaithful wife, rebel and a victim archetype. She falls in love with the the song of the mahout whom she has never seen, and perpetrates adultery with him. She takes the role of a rescuer when she consigns the mahout go scot free from the wrath of her husband. She rebels against her mother-in-law for conducting blood sacrifices but becomes a victim as she takes her life by plunging on the sword towards the end of the play.
It is significant that Karnad begins and ends the play with the Queen recounting the “two orbs” of the world – dark and light. The audience ascertains how the song of the Mahout has lured the queen out of her bed and has brought her to the singer in the deserted temple. She admits being seduced by the music even before submitting to a physical liaison with the man.

The play begins with the dialogue between the Mahout and the Queen and it becomes incontrovertible that both of them are unaware of each other. The Mahout is not aware who the other person is. He confesses to the queen that he is ugly but she does not concur with it. She says that his look does not matter to her, and that she has been mesmerized by his heavenly voice. She is not curious about the mahout nor is she willing to tell him about herself. She looks for a chance to decamp from the situation, perhaps hoping that it would remain a secret. The talkative mahout questions her repeatedly and guesses that she must belong to the upper class of the society. He proceeds to regale her with the story of his birth during an eclipse, which has made him so unattractive. He engages her in a deliberation of the contrasting deities they worship and he diagonalizes that she is a Jain. The queen appears to be in a strange limbo, listening to the Mahout’s voice, unable to move away. Meanwhile, the King enters the temple and calls her name and it is exposed to the audience as well as to the Mahout that the other person is the Queen. The Queen is discontented at the king’s advent, which is revealed, through her dialogue.

QUEEN: Until he saw you, he didn’t know who I was. I was just a woman, any woman.

QUEEN: … For one night, I was nameless. (87-8)

This reveals the frustration that even the Queen longs to live like an ordinary woman. Though the play, in the beginning, focuses only on the denouement of the Queen’s action,
the playwright furnishes the history of the king and the queen from the day of their first meeting and child-marriage with the help of an expository dialogue and two flashback techniques. They meet as children: he, as a prince of twelve and she, a princess of eight. Though their religions were diverse (he, a Kshatriya and she, a Jain) and their deities the true contrasts of each other, they were married. Out of his love for his Queen, he adopts Jainism and its principle of non-violence. The young couple married for fifteen years, remains childless, and is under tremendous psychological pressure to produce an heir to fulfil their duty to the kingdom. Their love for each other has become a habit, and differences and disappointments that have cropped up between them become apparent. However, he continues to call her ‘My Darling Queen …’ and she continues to respond to him in a similar vein. During moments of humiliation and pain and while facing hostility from others, especially after her miscarriages, they stand together and survive external onslaughts. Their marriage endures as marriages generally do. The ruthless scrutiny about her inability to bear a child may have pushed her to a breaking point. Continuance in the similar manner would easily have led them to old age and peaceful death. However, discontent and disharmony lure beneath the surface of their seeming conjugal ‘bliss’ and the thin layer of make-believe harmony and affection is vulnerable to pressure. Through the song, the story focuses on the present where the king and the Queen are found to be older and on the fact that the Queen is pregnant. The Mother makes up her mind to celebrate the arrival of the baby but the Queen grows wild and the antagonism emerges. The Queen tells the King that she does not want any blood sacrifice in the name of her son. Her power over the king is such that he is coerced to confront his mother and impress upon her the unfeasibility of solemnizing the news of the coming child by offering sacrifice. The pregnant wife makes use of a tool for manoeuvring the negotiation without realizing the kind of affect the womb of the time has in store for her. The husband loses
the mother in order to placate a wife. However, when the expected child does not arrive, the wife’s momentary victory turns into the most ignominious defeat and frustration causing her to indulge in aberrant behaviour with the Mahout.

The Queen begins to conciliate with herself the issue of fidelity of her marriage. In her relation with the mahout, she subverts the ideology of identity being restricted to name and form, social standing and acceptability. The play apparently deals with the question of adultery. The playwright seems to be asking whether only those who commit adultery with their bodies are adulterous or those who commit adultery with their minds too are. When the Queen is convinced that she has done nothing wrong, she asks as to why she should undertake any atonement for something she does not regard a sin. Instead, she tells the king, “I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn’t plan it. It happened and it was beautiful” (119). The King too craves for her but on the proviso that she capitulates herself to him in the same place, in the temple chamber. She agrees but recoils at the deliberate advances of the King. Caluminated by her denial, he derides her, “Yes go back to that savage ape-the ugly beast” (121).

Not wishing her husband any further torment, the Queen agrees to accomplish the symbolic sacrifice of killing the cock of dough. But as they raise the sword to plunge it, the real cock crows. Ruminating that it is the cock of dough that crowed, the queen starts to pet the cock like she would a baby. She becomes insane. The king tries to restrain her and then in desperation, picks up the dough and squashes it. Thwarted, the Queen turns upon him in fury and hatred, snatches up the sword, prepares to lunge at him and suddenly stops in horror, realizing what she is about to do. A cock crows again and the king is taken by surprise. The stage direction follows, “He turns to the door suddenly, she presses the point of the blade on her womb and impales herself on the sword.”(124)
A sacrifice is demanded for the sin committed and a supreme forgo is made. True to her name “Amritmati” (one of the life-giving elixirs), the Queen is illuminated by a beam of life-giving light.

The Mother on the other hand in the play is the personification of the continuing belief that ‘bali’ is the culmination of all worship. She is a staunch believer in tradition. Though she plays only a minor role, the impact she has on the life of her son and daughter-in-law is colossal. The same goes for Kurudavva and Mrs. Evans. They are all mother characters who have deep considerations for their sons. The negative aspect of the Mother archetype is focused more on the Mother. The King detects the lovemaking between the Queen and the mahout and unable to withstand it anymore he runs to the garden where he meets his mother. To her persistent questioning about his distraught state, he answers that he had a dream, “In the dream …. (pause) I saw that the royal swan in our garden had got caught in mud and was flapping its wings”(103). The ‘garden’ is an archetype of the feminine principle. The ‘royal swan’ represents the figure of the queen, ‘mud’ becomes the symbol of disgraceful behaviour and ‘flapping’ shows the nervousness of the queen. Indirectly, the king has dreamed about the relationship between the Queen and the mahout. The Mother then responds to him that the dreams speak and warn everyone. Sometimes the dream symbolises the creative energy in the form of collective unconscious. The dream becomes the archetypal consciousness in mother and she reminds her son about it.

MOTHER: Dreams have spoken to me. And whenever I ignored them, I suffered. Like when I lost your father. I was warned. You know that. I still blame myself. A dream like this is like an epidemic. The longer you ignore it, the more it spreads. (104)
More probing queries make the King confess the truth to his mother that the Queen has actually been with her lover at that point of time. The Mother displays horror and decree the sacrifice of a hundred sheep for the sin committed by the queen, which is bound to impact upon the well-being of her son and the kingdom. After a lot of persuasion by her abject son, she finally agrees to bring a non-living object of sacrifice to seek atonement for the evil portent of the queen’s deed. Though the king fibs that the mirage is only a piece of fiction, when the mother enquires him where the queen is he cannot answer. She torments her son by saying that if he would escort her to the queen at that moment, then she would give up her faith and follow Jainism. He cannot take her as the queen is with the mahout, for which the queen mother becomes hysterical and says, “Has she fallen so low? The whore -And you. How can you stand here like this? I should cut her to pieces … feed her to wolves and vultures. Do it, son now!” (107) She continues by saying that if he doesn’t kill her she herself will do it. When the king insists his mother to calm down, she is enraged.

MOTHER: What kind of a man are you? You have lost your manhood, You, You impotent ….

(Spits in his face. He moves back) (108)

Till then she is very furious, but from then on her actions show her deep love which is oedipal. Karnad writes:

(She suddenly realizes what she has done. Quickly moves forward and wipes his face)

Forgive me. Forgive me.

( They look at each other. Their deep fondness for each other is clear in that look)(108)
When the Mother asks him what he is going to do, he says he does not know. She then decides to make a sacrifice without bloodshed. However, when she knows that the Queen is not willing for the surrender, she makes an outstanding remark about transparency, advising the younger woman, “We should strip ourselves bare and stand naked face to face” (114). The mother mocks at the non-violent stance of her daughter-in-law, taunting her that if she is so much against the shedding of blood, she should have remained a virgin implying the biological process of creation. Pain, sacrifice and bloodshed are inextricably connected with the act of creation, and even those who believe in bloodless, non-violence cannot negate this truth of cosmic design.

The Queen remains adamant, and on seeing this, the Mother alters her tactics. With an ulterior purpose in mind, she describes on one hand, the blood and gore that even the delivery of a child necessitates; on the other hand, advises the queen against succumbing to the king’s pleas to perform the symbolic sacrifice. She gives a twist to the whole act. She says, “Don’t agree to the sacrifice. Don’t yield to his entreaties. The more you refuse, the more will my son suffer. Let him” (115). She seems to get a wicked pleasure from the painful dilemma of the young people. It is her vengeance for her son’s denial of his own religion, and for isolating her. She goads the Queen to torture her husband. Ultimately, she draws her daughter-in-law to her death.

Freud’s ‘Oedipus Complex’ has been given an Indian hue in the play. The king is excessively infatuated with his mother and his wife is envious of this. The mother-wife clash is apparent everywhere in the play. The relationship of the king with his mother is determined by his relationship with his wife. The Mother offers the sacrifice of a cock of flour as a token of repentance for the adultery committed. The idea of sacrifice is an idea of violence. Social consciousness in the plays of Karnad has been always present like the mother of the king here. The presence of the mother is to symbolize at one level the social
consciousness, at another it stands for an enmity of one woman to another for the love of a man though they are differently related to the man.

Kurudavva in NAG is interposed in Act 1. She is a blind old woman of the village, who is carried by her son Kappanna on his back. When she fathoms that Appanna has married, she pays a visit to the new bride, despite Kappanna’s protests. Kurudavva is touched to learn that Rani is so innocent that she does not know the real meaning of what it is being a ‘wife’ and that she has not had any physical relation with her husband. She sends her reluctant son home to bring a couple of magic roots and explains their efficacy to Rani. Kurudavva herself says the story of how she got the roots from a mendicant, which changed her life. One day a mendicant came to their house when Kurudavva was alone at home. Kurudavva cooked food especially for him and served it and he was pleased. He presented her with three roots saying that ‘any man who eats one of these will marry you’. A boy related to her visited their home and she mixed the paste of the root with food and served it to him. He instantly fell in love with her and married her. Kurudavva confers the smallest piece to Rani, but it has no effect on Appanna. Later, she hands over the biggest piece but while mixing it the curry turns blood red and Rani pours it on an anthill. A King cobra tastes it and is besotted to Rani. He assumes a form that of her husband and makes love to her. Rani thus finds fulfilment in the love potion prescribed by the helpful Kurudavva.

Like Kurudavva, Mrs.Evans of TGGB also has the traits of a positive mother archetype. In the conversation between Sam and Mrs. Evans, the latter understands that Nina is expecting a baby. Through Mrs. Evan’s interior monologue it is evident that she hankers that a baby should not be born to Sam and asks Nina to have the baby aborted. Mrs. Evans reveals about the curse on the Evanses. Her mother-in-law died in an asylum and her father before her. Sam’s aunt has not been out of the room for years. Sam’s
mother did not know about the insanity and her husband did not tell it to her until they got married. Mr. Evans lived in consternation thinking that any minute the curse might get on Sam. Whenever he had a headache or bumped his head; it drove Mrs. Evans too crazy. This is the reason why she asks Nina to abort the baby. She informs that Sam does not know anything about the insanity. To prevent him from comprehending it, she had sent him to the boarding school and made him forget that he had a mother. Mrs. Evans pleads Nina not to desert her son, if so he would go crazy. In her monologue, Mrs. Evans thinks of salvaging Nina.

MRS. EVANS: (thinking miserably)

Now she knows my suffering … Now I got to help her … she’s got a right to have a baby … sometime … somehow… she’s giving her life to save my Sammy … I got to save her. (63)

Mrs. Evans later converses to Nina that she used to wish to go out without her husband’s knowledge, and pick a man who would give her a healthy baby. She was afraid of God to have done it for which Nina replies that she does not have faith in God, the Father. Mrs. Evans views that being happy is the best experience, and all thoughts of morality are ‘just talk’. She is not a possessive mother and represents the loving mother archetype. She understands the real problem of Nina and asks her to get a baby from some other man. Like Nina, Padmini, Vishakha and Margaret are all married women but are not satisfied with their marital life.

Padmini of HAY, as her name signifies, is like a lotus torn between two polarities. The roots of the lotus, is on the earth but its face is towards the sky. She is married to Devadatta who paints her no less than Shakunthala. At the very first sight he takes her as his teacher, his muse and a source of his poetry. Kapila and Devadatta describe Padmini as, “…a white lotus. Her beauty is as the magic lake. Her arms the lotus creepers.” (13) The colour white symbolizes purity, holiness, sacredness, redemption, mystical
enlightenment, innocence, joy, light and life. It signifies the union of opposites to form a whole as well as the symbolic death of transformation and renewal. As a negative archetype, white represents death, terror and the supernatural.

Padmini is the delegate of a modern woman. She is bold, free, quick and enthralling. Due to her imposing appearance, Kapila finds her too irresistible for Devadatta and comprehends that what she needs is a man of steel. After getting married to Devadatta, she never finds a perfect man in him. That is why she does not hesitate to praise Kapila in Devadatta’s presence. As the bosom friend of her husband and their matchmaker Padmini has to respect and shower affection on Kapila, but at the same time, she has to maintain her limits or else, she will be accused of licentiousness. The failure to draw the boundary in their relationship would prove fatal to Padmini, as she will be held guilty for the action.

Kapila, on the other hand worships her beauty instinctively so much so that she relishes his company whenever he comes to see her husband. Devadatta becomes covetous, and shows this in his deportment. He tries to postpone the proposed journey on the cart to Ujjain, which disenchants Kapila. Seeing Kapila’s dissatisfaction, Padmini infringes the vow made to her husband and she insists on continuing with the plan of going to Ujjain. She is allured by the animal energy in Kapila, like the Queen in BALI. On the way, Padmini wonders at the charm of Kapila’s body when the latter climbs the tree to get her the ‘Fortunate Ladys Flower’, and she remarks, “He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter … How his body sways, his limbs curve – it’s a dance almost” (26). She reaches the conclusion that, “No woman could resist him – and what does it matter that she’s married” (26). The relationship between Padmini and Kapila has sexual connotations, though it remains confined to attraction only. The sketch of the journey to Ujjain also becomes an allegory of the sexual act. Here the cart, driven by the oxen,
stands for the phallus, the bull for the male virility and the road for the female sex organ. Padmini tells Kapila, “How beautifully you drive the cart, Kapila. Your hands don’t even move but the oxen seem to know exactly where to go” (25). It is Padmini’s inordinate desire for perfection that attracts her towards Kapila. It is because of her ambitious and independent nature that Devadatta suffers. Dejected, frustrated and depressed he kills himself at the temple of Kali. This odyssey to Ujjain is the unearthing of their unconscious love objects, during which a narcissistic wound is inflicted on each of the protagonists. Karnad introduces a subtle bifurcation. Padmini and Kapila visit Rudra temple (Rudra is the consort of Kali), while Devadatta ventures into the Kali temple where he beheads himself. On seeing Devadatta dead, Kapila too commits suicide. Looking at the dead bodies of the friends Padmini laments and implores the Goddess to help her.

In her prayer to Kali, Padmini’s real desire is brought out. When Kali advises her to attach the bodies of Devadatta and Kapila, Padmini asks Kali, “Why did you wait so long?” implying that it was what she desired throughout after her marriage. The real intention of Padmini is understood by the goddess and it is evident through the dialogue.

KALI [surprised]. Is that all you can think now?

PADMINI. Mother …

KALI. I’ve never seen anyone like you.

PADMINI. How could one possibly hide anything from you, Mother.

KALI. That’s true enough. (32-33)

Padmini deliberately exchanged the heads as the direction reveals it.

[Eagerly, Padmini puts the heads – that is, the masks back. But in her excitement she mixes up so that Devadatta’s mask goes to Kapila’s body vice versa.] (33)
She closes her eyes and says to Kali, “I’m ready, Mother” (33). There is not even a bit of shame in her. Even Kali is taken aback seeing her guts.

KALI [in a resigned tone]. My dear daughter, there should be limit even to Honesty. Anyway – So be it! (33)

When Kapila and Devadatta come alive after the bifurcation, Padmini, “opens her eyes, but still doesn’t dare to look at them.” Had she been innocent she would have opened her eyes. Further when Kapila says that no one will believe the story of the bifurcation it is Padmini who once again says that it must be kept, ‘Inside us’ (35). The phrase, ‘Inside us’, gains importance as it is stressed that the secret must remain within one’s own self.

The friendly relationship of Devadatta and Kapila is tangled when Padmini transposes the heads of the deceased friends. The friends are over-joyed to get life once again, not knowing the seriousness of the exchange of heads by the use of mask. They are thrilled and excited, but Padmini comprehends the complexity of the situation as to who could now be her husband. There come all sorts of complications in adjudicating with whom Padmini should go. Both men claim themselves as Devadatta. The fracas regarding the identity of Devadatta raises the primieval conflict between the mind and the body. The crucial problem to be solved immediately is to decide who is Devadatta, either the one having Devadatta’s head or the one having his body. They appeal to the sage for a solution. The sage says that the body with Devadatta’s head is her “rightful husband” (40). Not only is Padmini’s desire for Kapila’s body fulfilled, but Kapila’s body also finds pleasure of a union with Padmini. If Padmini symbolizes the erotic principle, her nature might not accept the curbs put on the instinctual urges. When Iago says,” Virtue: a fig!” (I, III: 322) and “Reputation is an idle and most false imposition” (II, III, 268-9), he is
referring to the complex social presumptions which regulate human behaviour. Karnad’s play refers to such complex human predicaments that can have no easy solutions.

Humankind cannot live with perfection for a long time. Padmini’s query, “Must the head always win” becomes apposite when after about a year Devadatta’s head fails to enjoy the liveliness of Kapila’s body. Its litness begins to wear off owing to the lack of physical labour. The mind that controls the body starts transforming the body, making it lose all its virility. Slowly Devadatta’s head with Kapila’s body regains its former self – a delicate body. Padmini, who feels that she has had the best of both men, gets disillusioned. She starts missing Kapila, his impulsiveness and his physicality. Devadatta loses Padmini to Kapila once again. She soliloquizes wistfully, “Kapila? What could he be doing now? Could his body be fair still and his face dark? (long pause) Devadatta changes. Kapila changes. And me?” (49).

On her second journey into the woods, Padmini takes on the guise of the archetypal seeker.

PADMINI: I asked the villagers … And the pilgrims. And the hunters.
And the Tribesman. When there wasn’t anyone anymore, I asked myself. Everyone saw to it that I didn’t chose the wrong road. (54)

She says that neither the villagers, nor the pilgrims, nor the hunters viewed that her affair with Kapila was incorrect. These words reinforce the idea of the search of completeness and to ascertain that she is not guilty. The focus of the play is on Padmini, the woman who is faced with this impossible situation. Padmini’s scrape is the predicament of a modern emancipated woman in our society who is torn between two polarities; a woman who loves her husband as well as someone else for two different aspects of their personalities. Devadatta and Kapila cannot accept each other when it comes to sharing a woman, and all the three annihilate themselves in the process. The two die and Padmini executes sati.
Before sacrificing herself, Padmini makes it clear that she cannot aspire to get perfection even in her next life and she prays to Kali she states, “You must have your joke even now. Other woman can die praying that in that they should get the same husband in all the lives to come. You haven’t left me even that little consolation” (63).

Robert Browning’s ‘And thus we half-men struggle’ (433) could very well be the motif for Karnad’s play, *HAY*. It is a memorable treatment of the existential theme of the fundamental ambiguity of the human condition. This subject is suggested in the play itself in phrases such as ‘search for completeness’, and ‘this mad dance of incompleteness’ (57). This is the main theme focussed by the Existentialist too where all human beings strive for freedom and happiness. The love triangle is a metaphor for her deep-rooted desire for the brain and the brawn. Even in O’Neill’s *TGGB*, the theme of extramarital relationships is brought in a different way. In *HAY* and *TFTR*, the female characters choose extramarital relation willingly. *TGGB* begins with a prologue, exhibiting Dion and Brown in love with the same girl, Margaret. Unlike Padmini, Margaret loves her husband but only when he has the mask on his face. Yet she is a faithful wife archetype, as she does not fall in love with Brown though he openly says that he is in love with her.

Through the discourse between Billy and Margaret, it is evident that she is in love with Dion. She takes off the mask and gazes at the moon displaying that she is in a dream world. Though Brown is proposing to her, she is lost in the thoughts of Dion. When her dream is broken, she puts on her mask and says to Billy to go back to dance. When he tries to kiss her she says “… Like a brother! You can kiss me if you like … A big - brother kiss. It doesn’t count. (He steps back crushed with head bowed).” (313) Billy is frustrated, yet he wishes Margaret and Dion all the success and happiness in the world and says that he will always remain their best friend. Dion is jovial to know that Margaret
is in love with him. He is just like Devadatta of \textit{HAY}. He says, “… She loves me! I am not afraid! I am strong! I can love! She protects me! Her arms are softly around me! … Now I am born.” (316)

The marriage of Dion and Margaret turns out to be a fiasco as she marries Dion without understanding him and bears his children. The domestic life of the alien couple turns to be a mournful one. There is an immense transformation in the physical features of both Dion and Margaret in the later scenes. It is evident that Margret is in tribulation. Her husband gets addicted to drinking and gambling and feels that marriage is a domestic diplomacy. He says, “… This is domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code - when neither has the other’s key!” (322) When Margaret says to him that he must start his work, Dion is frustrated. He becomes an alien to his wife and loses the feelings of a devoted husband. Margaret, on the advice of Dion, approaches Brown for a job. Dion is disgusted with the life when Brown says that he is still in love with Margaret. It is too much for Dion and he leaves his mask, Margaret and his sons to Brown and dies.

DION: … I leave Dion Anthony to William Brown- for him to love and obey – for him to become me - then my Margaret will love me - my children will love me …May Margaret love you! (350)

These words are akin to that of Devadatta in \textit{HAY}, when he decides to behead himself in the Kali temple. Through the words of Brown, it becomes clear that Margaret has loved not Dion, but the mask. He says, “… And this is what Margaret loved, not you! Not you! …. ” (350) Brown tries to merge his identity with the personality of Dion and decide to live in his disguise to savour the fame and fortune of the latter. When Margaret comes in search of Dion, Brown dresses himself in ‘DION’S clothes and wears his mask. She squeezes his hand and finds that it is stronger yet cannot identify that it is not Dion.

O’Neill writes:
(They kiss. A shudder passes through both of them. She breaks away laughing with aroused desire)

MARGARET: Why Dion? Aren’t you ashamed? You haven’t kissed me like that in ages! (352)

When Brown imitates the voice of Dion, Margaret wonders that his voice has altered. She is unable to make the difference even though unconsciously she puts forward certain queries. As Margaret has not seen Dion for days, she visits Brown’s office. He starts back apprehensively but controls himself and informs that Dion is busy at his work. To make her happy, he says that he has decided to leave everything in the hands of Dion. When Margaret says that Brown’s voice sounded like Dion’s he tears off his mask and says, “… Think of me! I love you Margaret! Leave him! I’ve always loved you! Come away with me! … We’ll go abroad and be happy” (357). Margaret is amazed and asks him whether he realizes what he is saying. She, unlike Padmini, is true to her husband and does not agree to Brown’s invitation. In the latter scene, Brown enters in Dion’s mask and she fails to recognize him once again. Brown too plays the role of Dion outstandingly. When Margaret thinking Brown as Dion reveals that Brown behaved in a queer manner, Brown replies, “Poor Billy! Poor Billy the Goat! (with a mocking frenzy) I’ll kill him for you! I’ll serve you his heart for breakfast!” (363) Brown unconsciously wants to kill the Brown in himself and assert him as Dion. Margaret is worried and apologizes, “… I’ve never thought of Billy Brown except as a friend, and lately, not even that! He’s just a stupid old fool! (364)

When Margaret shows the ‘designs’ to the committee members and says that it is her husband’s, they are surprised. Brown reveals that he has kept that as a secret and the model belongs to Dion. All of a sudden, he gets furious and tears it into pieces.

BROWN: Can’t you see this insult - a terrible, blasphemous insult! - that
this embittered failure Anthony hurling in the teeth of success - an insult
to you, to me, to you, Margaret …. (369-70)

In a fraction of a second, he disappears and reappears in the mask of ‘DION’. He then reveals that Mr. William Brown is dead. The committee accuses that Dion is the murderer but Margaret replies that her husband is innocent. The captain, on seeing the mask of Dion in Brown’s room, points out that Dion is dead. Margaret taking the mask says, “You can never die till my heart dies!” (377) The play ends with the Epilogue and with the words of Margaret. She goes back to the world of dreams.

MARGARET. (slowly removes her mask, lying it on the bench, and stares up at the moon with a wistful, resigned sweetness) So long ago! And yet I’m still the same old Margaret. It’s only our lives that grow old. We are where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our eyes begin to open … I want Dion to leave the sky for Me! (377)

She indicates that even if she dies somebody like her will be reborn. It symbolises that archetypes are immortal. Like in TGGB even in TFTR the playwright has woven out a magnificent texture of love, betrayal, passion, jealousy and sacrifice around the relationship between Nittilai and Aravasu and between Vishakha and the three men in her life – Yavakri, Paravasu and Raibhya.

Vishakha and Yavakri are star-crossed lover’s archetypes. Vishaka is the adulteress archetype, as she commits adultery with her former lover after her marriage. She is also a victim archetype and suffers due to Raibhya, Paravasu and Yavakri. The man-woman relationship between Vishaka and the men in her life embody the very spirit of an ominous famine – a sense of a mental and moral deprivation that has parched the sap of their soul. Throughout her life, Vishaka is under the shadow of some man who curbs her natural growth and is not keen on building up a permanent and sensible relationship with
her. She has been given a secondary position to her pursuits, social and personal. Before her marriage, she has had a passionate relation with Yavakri. However, before their bond could achieve fruition in marriage, Yavakri goes to the forest for penance. In his absence, Vishaka is forced to marry his cousin, Paravasu. The couple comments their connubial life without any serious commitment to each other as Paravasu knows that Vishakha was not willing to marry him. He is more fascinated with the spiritual and mystical aspects of life than to remain confined within the boundary of an ordinary household. In her later meeting with Yavakri, she concedes to her unwilling marriage with Paravasu. Vishakha feels heavenly pleasure in her sensual fulfillment in the company of her husband, for she is eager enough to know the real meaning of life through the attraction and repulsion of the body. Amidst such bodily pleasures, her husband decides to leave her alone in the hermitage.

Vishakha’s description of her life with Paravasu exposes the harshness with which he makes the most intimate of human relationship conform to a structural time bound pattern. The question of happiness recedes into the background as sexuality turns into a mindless mechanical activity without love and emotion where the body becomes more important than the soul. It is no longer a passion but a routine that symbolizes the couple’s last bid to sustain an otherwise incompatible conjugality. Like two anatomies capable of dry biological functions, they live under the same roof with an unbridgeable gulf between their minds. The man-woman relationship is stripped off all romantic notions of mutual love and sympathy. It is relentlessly de glamorised to reveal how perfectly a man and a woman whose bodies share rapport can be mentally strangers to each other.

Physical deprivation and mental exhaustion make Vishakha inwardly hungry for love, communication and human bondage. Yavakri meets her in a lonely place in the
jungle where she goes to fetch water from, and he requests her to talk to him. Being a married woman, she abstains from her lover's company. Yet driven by her re-awakened instinct she responds to his amorous call. Behind the champak tree, symbol of love, especially as its fragrance is intoxicating, the old lovers surrender to each other. It is a conscious union of two experienced adults. By immersing herself into the sea of sexual gratification, Vishakha brings home the question of women’s sensuality, which is as real as that of a man. Vishakha opens her heart to Yavakri, “I live in this hermitage, parched and wordless, like a she-devil” (15-6). Vishakha appears not as a character but as a burning pyre of sex. She says, “Alone I have become dry like tinder. Ready to burst into flames at a breath. To burn things around me down at the slightest chance”(16). She has submitted herself just for the demand of the body. She says, “I was happy this morning. You were so good. So warm I wanted to envelope you in everything I could give”(24).

From the temporary heaven, Vishakha soon lands into a world of harsh reality. She falls prey to the sceptic hostility of Raibhya, her father-in-law, who gets incensed over the possibility of some incest. The revered Brahmin savagely beats up and threatens to kill his daughter-in-law; he calls her a whore and a bitch just like Appanna of NAG and Mother of BALI. Standing on the brink of destruction, Vishakha refuses to submit and then confesses her secret meeting with Yavakri. When the furious old man decides to murder Yavakri by sending the Brahma Rakhasa, Vishakha tries her best to dissuade him and she rushes to save Yavakri’s life. It is Yavakri her illegitimate lover, who has rejuvenated the ‘dying’ woman within her by showing her the path of love. However, to her horror, she finds that Yavakri has used her as a tool to exercise his vengeance upon her family. From a passionate lover, Yavakri turns to be a trader of human emotions. With this Vishaka is transformed into a battleground for two opposing forces of masculinity. She has to pay for her credulity and determines not to let go Yavakri scot-
free. His earlier decision to desert her and do penance has taken its toll on her life, and it is the same with Paravasu who stays away from her. Determined to retaliate, she spills the water consecrated by Yavakri in order to strike down Brahma Rakshasa, and thus leave him vulnerable. Yavakri’s selfishness and monstrosity come to the surface when he, as if to justify his act of betrayal, says that it is not his fault that Vishakha got married to Paravasu.

Despite Yavakri’s shameless deception that poisons Vishakha’s being, she pleads with him to take refuge in her father’s house, the only place that can protect him from danger. Perhaps she does this mysterious act thinking that if her husband can escape punishment for abandoning her insensibly, so can Yavakri. As Yavakri flees from the scene like a helpless coward leaving Vishakha as solitary as ever, all the romantic concepts of love and romance crumble down etching out a sense of meaninglessness and the immorality of mortal ambitions and desires. On the whole, Vishakha is a victim of both physical and psychic destruction. With sheer force of impartiality and sense of justice she is loathing to protect her culprit husband Paravasu who is guilty of patricide, and to let the innocent Aravasu suffer the consequence. The fire sacrifice has played havoc in her life and so it does not matter to her if it is going to be ruined in Paravasu’s absence. She advises Paravasu to live his own life, the one thing that she has not been able to do in her life, ‘Live your own life’(35).

In the end, though she cannot resist Paravasu from abandoning her again, the retaliation of her part is complete. Yavakri and Paravasu both have their repayment from Vishakha; the former, a betrayal against one who betrayed and the latter, a gesture of pernicious defiance against irresponsibility. As Paravasu responds to the call of his greater ‘duty’, Vishakha walks mechanically back to the hermitage symbolizing a resumption of her joyless and monotonous activities. This is a relationship that never
achieves fruition, resolution or salvation. It is trapped in the void of perpetual nothingness.

Parallel to the story of Yavakri, Paravasu, Raibhya and Vishakha is the divine love story of Nittilai and Arvasu. The man-woman relationship here is treated in the light of sacrifice, good will and humanity. Arvasu and Nittilai symbolize the primitive joy and innocence of love and seem to be a patch of green in the dry and desolate drought stricken land. Nittilai, as a married woman of the hunter - clan poses some apparent contradictions with that of Vishakha. Nittilai symbolize some inborn personality traits for true love and humanitarianism, though, she like Vishakha becomes guilty of breaking the social code as a married woman. Vishakha’s love for Yavakri is meant for the fulfillment of her bodily needs. She also exhibits some perversions and a split in her personality when she willingly submits herself before Yavakri. Nittilai, as a married woman, hardly transgresses the limits of decency and good conduct for the needs of her body. Vishakha slips to the voluptuous urge of Yavakri, while Nittilai controls her passions amidst the unfavourable scenes, situations and contextual realities and emerges triumphant as a being of rationality and super-consciousness.

Nittilai, as a Dalit woman, has a well-balanced mind and she calms down Arvasu’s feeling for revenge and vengeance. Arvasu undergoes some bizarre sensations, which are called in psychology ‘the process of nightmare’. The nightmare represents unconscious motifs and unacceptable thoughts of the human mind. Nittilai, as an obsession, becomes an object of daydreaming to Arvasu. She advises him for performing the role of Vritra for the preference to a mortal life. She succeeds in relieving Arvasu from his unconscious fear, and his hysterical mutism. They are complete misfits in a world that is ruled by the forces of jealousy, hatred and treachery. The only way to preserve their love is to reject the present world they inhabit, and look for a new one. But
before the lovers begin a new life, Nittilai is brutally killed by her husband who cannot forgive her illicit relationship with Arvasu.

Karnad and O’Neill place their women protagonists in an Ibsenian complex – that appears to defy patriarchal tradition. They revise traditional folk tales and myths in order to create heroines enmeshed in the crossroads of tradition. Their dilemmas do not seem to transform them into mature or triumphant individuals but only lead them either to their death or to their survival as conflicting forces. Padmini in *HAY* has to live and die with the real and the unreal ‘husband’, torn asunder by her sexual desire. Rani of *NAG* chooses to play the role of an ideal ‘loyal’ wife as the safer option rather than acknowledge her adulterous relationship with the snake-lover.

In Devayani of *YAY* and Christine of *MBE*, the archetype of shadow mother is predominant. They do not take up the responsibility as wives when their husbands are in predicament. When her position as a Queen is threatened, Devayani leaves the palace forgetting duties to her son. Christine, on the other hand, considers her own daughter as her greatest enemy. In her are the characteristics of both the devouring mother and the abandoning mother archetype. Abbie of *DUE* and Christine marry for security. They do not find happiness in their marital life, and hence desire other men. Abbie has incestuous relationship with her stepson Eben and Christine is in love with Adam. Adam’s love is a byproduct of his hatred against Ezra, Christine’s husband and Eben makes love to Abbie as revenge against his father Ephraim.

There are many undaunted women like Lavinia and Chitralekha. Lavinia of *MBE* accuses her mother for murdering her father, Ezra whom she loved dearly. She even goes on to force Orin to kill Adam. It is due to her that Christine commits suicide. Yet Lavinia remains audacious. She does not commit suicide or die like the other Mannons, but infact decides to have a secluded life. Chitralekha of *YAY* on the other hand questions
patriarchy. It is she who raises her voice against Yayati for taking away her husband’s youth. In all these plays, the dead mothers also play a very significant role. Though they are absent in the play, their presence is felt throughout. They have strong influence on their sons.

Rani, Padmini, Nina, Queen, Vishakha and Margaret are all married woman. There is a triangular love relationship in all the characters. There is a displacement of emotions in all the characters. Nina of *SI* and Vishaka of *TFTR* are happy with the person whom they first fell in love with. Though Nina has many men in her life, it is to Marsden that she relies on in the end. Vishaka too loves Yavakri and has sexual relation with him even after she is married to Paravasu. Rani has relationship with Naga unknowingly assuming that it is Appanna. Padmini willingly or knowingly has relation with Kapila. The Queen falls in love with the music of the Mahout. Padmini, the Queen and Vishaka die in the end and Nina and Margaret are left alone in the end to face their future.

While these playwrights’ presentations of the woman are romantic, the solutions offered in their plays for the woman’s dilemma is realistic, with patriarchal overtones. The women characters seem to hover between the man made paradigms. They are emotionally broken by their conflicting drives, psychologically fragmented by the dichotomy of self and existentially alienated from the world around them. Driving factor for what these women are doing is their survival instinct. Though Padmini does not use literal mask, she adorns herself with a verbal mask. In the presence of Kapila she is different person and in that of Devadatta, she is another. She is completely masked. Only an elderly woman can comprehend the quandaries of a woman. Both O’Neill and Karnad were forced to invent techniques to say about the predicaments of man and woman.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid


5. Ibid. 411
