

INTRODUCTION

Eugene O'Neill, the world famous American dramatist wrote many plays based on his life experience and on behavioural patterns of different characters. His characterization is vivid and marked by his imagination, talent and foresight.

The extant critical material on his plays has already covered number of aspects. But nobody yet has studied his women characters. So the study of the role and relations of O'Neill's Women is very necessary.

In terms of relationship to the men in their lives, or by their biological roles, the female characters are defined. Other than being daughters, wives, mothers or lovers, the females have got no importance at all.

In most of his plays the relationship between sexes is explored, the men took the women, not as intellectual companions but as lovers, mates, parents only in all biological roles. Other than being daughters, wives, mothers or lovers the women have no significant careers. Women in O'Neill have an ability to save or destroy men. Sexual passion has become a disease to the most of O'Neill's tragic women. In such a situation recovery is impossible.

The female characters are dreamers of some unrealized goal. Ruth Atkins, Abbie Patnam and Nina Leeds are searching something beyond their present existence. The search is for a perfect marriage, a perfect love, a perfect son.

In O'Neill's Plays the role of prostitutes is important. The men go to prostitutes to punish themselves for their guilty feeling towards the chaste women in their lives.¹

The female characters are fulfilling the traditional role of women, but a large number of male characters are involved in their work, which gives them a place in the larger world.

Only those plays where women characters are the central figures, or where they dominate so much are selected for this dissertation.

1. Doris Nelson, "O'Neill's Women : A special Section " The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter, (Summer fall 1982).