

## Eugene O'Neill's Concern with Sexuality and the Behavioral Disorders

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**Abstract:** Sex as a biological activity contains multiple aspects from pleasure to pain, and from ravishment to conjugal bliss; thus having the normal and abnormal elements. It is a primary source of reproduction carrying pleasure/orgasm or pain element in the process. Healthy sexual activities engender orgasmic responses (pleasure) and nurture human growth along healthy lines. Its derangement, however, may cause numerous psycho-biological and behavioural regressions Eugene O'Neill is primarily a dramatist of human emotions and is deeply concerned with dramatizing extremes of human behavioural tendencies with marked regressivity. His treatment of human sexuality is an illustration of his dramatizing extremes of emotive and psychological states with predominant regressive pattern in human conduct and attitude towards sexuality. Here he owes a lot to Freud's psychoanalytic exploration of human consciousness and his theoretical stance on infantile psycho-sexual development in familial context. Therefore one comes across a persistent mode of incest in familial relation in his plays of different periods. The study, however, highlights here such other areas of human sexuality as marital sexuality, male sexual abstinence/wastefulness, female heterosexuality, prostitution, and neurasthenia with reference to selected plays of different dramatic career to emphasize that there is predominant pattern of regressivity in all these areas of human sexuality that has its negative bearing on human behavioural pattern and conduct.

**Key words:** Modern American drama; sexuality; behavioural disorders; neurasthenia

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is fundamental to many close human relationships. Marriage endorses it to form healthy social and cultural foundation of a family and society. But it is to be found in other such relationships as dating, and other committed romantic relationships. As a generic term, it specifies dimorphic reality of human reproductiveness and biological maleness and femaleness as two behavioral modes of being in the world<sup>1</sup>. As a theoretical, aesthetic, and practical moral problem, it is associated with the rise of modern secular culture that had its foundation in the decline of religious world view, and the rise and the rise of a western society devoted to the production of goods and knowledge. Sexuality as a matter of fact is

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psycho-biological process/phenomenon related directly to human sustenance in individual, family and society and associated with human reproduction/reproductive processes. Sex itself as a biological activity as explained above contains multiple aspects from pleasure to pain, and from ravishment to conjugal bliss; thus having the normal and abnormal elements. It is a primary source of reproduction carrying pleasure/orgasm or pain element in the process. Healthy sexual activities engender orgasmic responses (pleasure) and nurture human growth along healthy lines. Its derangement, however, may cause numerous psycho-biological regressions that may in turn engender psycho-biological regressivity. Recent studies in the field of abnormal psychology provide expert analysis of sex related disorders like 'sexual addiction' "sexual dependence", "compulsive sexual behavior (for example compulsive promiscuity, or masturbation)", "pornography dependence" etc (Hansell and Damour, 2005, p. 330). Such disorders are treated like substance –use disorders. The resultant impact of such disorders is naturally and clinically that neurasthenia. Eugene O'Neill is primarily a dramatist of human emotions and is deeply concerned with dramatizing extremes of human behavioral tendencies. His treatment of human sexuality is an illustration of his dramatizing extremes of emotive and psychological states. Here he owes a lot to Freud's psychoanalytic exploration of human consciousness and his theoretical stance on infantile psycho-sexual development in familial context. Therefore one comes across a persistent mode of incest in familial relation in his plays of different periods. The existing scholarship on O'Neill substantiates the Freudian oedipal dynamics of his personae relation with the mother and the repetitive conflict between the sons and the fathers in O'Neill's plays or the fraternal rivalry/conflict for the same desired object (mother) equally establish this oedipal nature of the relationship in the family<sup>2</sup>. The study, however, highlights such other areas of human sexuality as marital sexuality, male sexual abstinence/wastefulness, female heterosexuality, prostitution, and neurasthenia with reference to selected plays of different dramatic career to emphasize that there is predominant pattern of regressivity in all these areas of human sexuality that has its negative bearing on human behavioral pattern and conduct.

## **2. SEXUALITY IN THEORY**

Validity and primacy of sexuality in modern philosophical, literary and psychoanalytic discourses and practices owes a lot to Sigmund Freud. Freud's major statement on sexuality can be found in the *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*, (1910)<sup>3</sup> which is divided into three sections: The Sexual Aberration, Infantile Sexuality, and The Transformations of Puberty. The subject of sexual aberration has sections on homosexuality, fetishism, scopophilia and exhibitionism, sadism and masochism. In his essay "Infantile Sexuality" Freud stresses that sexual variety in both aim and object is a natural human characteristic. But he hardly present here sexual development as a clear example of steady progress toward adult sexuality, rather he argues that sexual development moves in phases that are characterized by such negative features as regression and memory loss. Freud also outlines very different developmental profiles for boys and girls as infantile sexuality draws to a close: boys experience a "castration complex," while girls experience "penis envy." Although, both sexes go through the first oral phase and the second "anal-sadistic phase," the sexes are distinguished during the third "phallic phase," based on their relationship to the male member. Even after the most successful transitions to adulthood, however, Freud claims that the choice of object and aim in mature sexuality is not reached without "ambivalence. The third essay attempts to define the nature of sexual pleasure and sexual excitement. The pleasure of genital orgasm, Freud writes, "is the highest in intensity, and its mechanism differs from that of the earlier pleasure. It is brought about entirely by discharge: it is wholly a pleasure of satisfaction and with it the tension of the libido is for the time being extinguished"(29). What one gets in these essays is that here he theorizes that object of love in infancy, which is incestuous must be overcome in puberty, but that is possible only through repression. In particular boys must prevail over their oedipal association to their mothers and experience apprehension about castration. At the same time they must conserve their competitive feelings about their fathers to prevent their sexuality from "inverting" toward homosexual relations. However, little is said about female sexual identity and femininity that has been picked up in later works, the essay *Female Sexuality*, (1931) and the lecture on *Femininity*, 1933.

Unlike Freud, Schopenhauer develops the thought that the sexual impulse serves the will to life in its persistent effort to perpetuate itself in the human species that is in fact its highest manifestation. Although, he argues, a man and a woman believe themselves drawn together to produce a new individual in whom the qualities of both parties will be continued, but what draws them together at bottom is the will to life's furthering itself by infusing into them personal desire to continue their existence in a new being. No selfish gene is at work here--only the all-mighty will to life. Moreover, when two individuals personally sacrifice everything just to produce and protect a new individual, this too is simply an expression of the will to life through the propagation of the species. His main essay on sexual love is to be found in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, (1844). Its title, "The Metaphysics of Sexual Love," as well as its place in Schopenhauer's writings specify that it is meant to be an essential part of his general philosophical, or even metaphysical, system. What he attempts in this essay is a metaphysical clarification of the massive power that the sexual desire exercises in human life. In post modern era it is Michel Foucault who has advanced his theories of sexuality as power struggle. A student of Nietzsche and of Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, Foucault studied array of social institutions, including prisons, mental institutions, medical clinics and universities. He came to believe that those in power manipulate prevailing attitudes to suit their ends and redefine the ideas of insanity, illness, sexuality and criminality in order to identify and oppress undesirables and sexual "deviants. In his three-volume work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault defines the history of sex and sexuality as a history of suppression by those in power. Such power has marked itself in terms of censorship, prohibition or non-recognition. Such power relations can be complex and subtle as well as overt. In the first volume, *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault discovers that the prevailing negatives attitudes toward sex and sexuality between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries did little to repress but much to encourage overflow of discussion about the topic. People could not stop thinking and writing about "it." The result of this "explosion" of knowledge was to redefine and rediscover different forms of sexuality. In the next two volumes, Foucault traces the history of discourse about sexuality back to the beginnings of Western Civilization. In the second volume, *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault shows that the Greeks exposed through their writings the proper regulations regarding sexual behavior. Sex was not the romantic end of one's being but a regulated social institution with strict codes necessary for maintaining social cohesion and control. In the third volume, *The Care of the Self*, the author carries on his analyses of the ancient world to the Romans and their stern sexual codes of moderation and restraint.

### 3. SEXUALITY IN LITERATURE

Treatment of sexuality in literature has always remained problematic. It has been treated imaginatively associated strongly with love and friendship. After the modern development in psychoanalysis, however, the range of studying sexuality along psychoanalytic lines and terminologies has been stretched back to the primitive society and ancient civilization and its literature. Munson Deats in *The Politics of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: An Early Modern Perspective* examines the concepts of subjectivity, gender, sex, and sexuality as presented in sixteenth century discourse, and concludes that those concepts were as difficult to pin down in the early modern period as they are today. Charles R. Forker (1990) commenting on the eroticism in Renaissance theatre writes that it constituted "a body of plays as highly charged with eroticism and as profoundly concerned with questions of sexuality as any in history including Restoration comedy, which is often thought of as obsessed with sex and dominated by lubricity"(1). Stage, continues to write Forker (1990) served for Elizabethans and Jacobean, "whether consciously or unconsciously, as the chief artistic medium for projecting images of sexual desire and aversion, providing audiences with a means of focusing, defining, or "processing" (as de-constructionist critics might say) the fundamentally ambivalent nature of their own erotic attitudes and feelings"(3). some examples of sexuality<sup>19</sup>. Shakespeare, himself as usual, provides the healthiest and most humane view of sexuality in the period by refusing to isolate sex from a more comprehensive view of the human condition, from those moral and spiritual values in the light of which he invites us to assess all aspects of human experience. The blessing of the bride beds in for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, confirms the creativity of sexual encounter as an aspect of marriage, and therefore of social cohesion

and Christian sacrament. Biggins (2003) here studies the links between sex and violence in Macbeth, as well as the association of both with the Weird Sisters. Hamlet has also been analyzed as strictly Freudian play with marked oedipal motif functioning in prince hamlet that lead to his neurosis.<sup>21</sup> Gil (2006) examines the ways in which Shakespeare's sonnets depart from the sonnet tradition associated with Petrarch, particularly in their treatment of desire, both homosexual and heterosexual. Joseph Pequigney, in his *Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1985), interprets Shakespeare's sonnets in Freudian perspectives. He argues "the psychological dynamics of the poet's relations with the friend comply in large measure with Freud's authoritative discussions of homosexuality" (1). McGurk, John "Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe, Institutions, Texts, Images." (1994) provides a re-reading of Renaissance texts and images by means of exploring sexuality and gender in art, literature and society in Italy, France and England. Modern American literature principally drama and Fiction show marked tendency to highlight sexuality more as a violence than as a healthy process for orgasmic love. In *Afro-American Dramatist*, it assumes terrible conditions to shatter the image of love. Freudian patterns also remain very visible in such works. O'Reilly, Andrea (1996) examines *Jazz* as a mother-child relationship of Violet and Rose, Joe and Wild, as well as explores how the loss of the mother fractures and displaces the child's developing self. As Violet and Joe grow into adulthood, they simultaneously seek to forget and find the mother they lost through strategies of denial and substitution. However, in repressing the pain of this loss and in attempting to replace the mother in adult relationships, Violet and Joe move further from their own original selves. Only when Violet and Joe mourn the loss of their mothers is recovery of the child's "me" made possible. *Jazz* is thus a story about the wounding and healing of un-mothered children. In search of my mother's garden, I found my own: mother-love, healing, and identity in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (Murillo, Cindy, 1996) discusses theoretical assertions of sexuality in the selected texts, which show how a "phallic logic," persist regardless of the emergence of free speech and the weakening of obscenity laws at the turn of the twentieth century. Michael Sofair (2006) analyses modern depravity in his review of the series of film *Sexual Despondency: the Split Image of Globalization* that offers us an array of perspectives which reveal a global process of standardization at work undermining all pre-existing cult existing cultures, Western as much as non-Western

#### **4. SEXUALITY IN O'NEILL'S PLAYS**

Sexuality in O'Neill exists in different forms that are predominantly regressive and degenerative in both individual and familial contexts. First concern deals with marital sexuality that pertains to sexual relation between spouses. James W. Maddock (1989) analyses a model of family sexuality that according to him give way to broad principles for distinguishing what he calls "healthy" from "unhealthy" patterns of sex related relations in families. He mentions eroticism /sexual dimension as essential to family experience. He terms "Sex as "pervasive in the organization, structure, and function of a family system" (131), and that a "combination of gender complementarity and erotic interest provides important motivation for the formation and maintenance of a family unit, and affects many of the goals and purposes of family members" (131). He argues that sexual pattern among family members create "a network of shared meanings, which, in turn, serve as a basis for further behavioral sequences between members, creating new meanings upon which additional behavior is based, and so on."(132) One aspect of positive sexuality in familial context is the capacity to respond to erotic stimulation in such a way as to make sexual activity including any activity that is not harmful or exploitive as positive, pleasurable aspect of one's experience(131). The unhealthy sexual activities in familial context are that of sexual neglect or virtual ignorance of family member's sexuality (133). Secondly sexual abuse among and of family members is also taken as serious unhealthy sexual dimension of modern day family structure, the most poignant is "the startling incidence of sexual abuse of children and adolescents by older family members-siblings, parents or parent-substitutes, and more distant relatives (133). In O'Neill the healthy sexual dimension in the familial context particularly between the spouses is a rarity. In *Long day's journey into Night*, we have a relation that is positive and fulfills healthy sexual marital bond between the spouses. It had its origin in Mary's sensual part of love and desire for marriage with stage actor James Tyrone. Her desire appears unusual as Mary had in fact committed herself to the service of the church as

a nun. But after her first encounter with handsome James, she bowed to her sensual part of feminine nature. In fact his handsome male outlook acts as a powerful stimulation of her erotic /sensual self that overrides her religious commitment. Mary recalls her stimulation for marriage in such words:

If you think Mr. Tyrone is handsome now, you should have seen when I first met him. He had the reputation of the best looking man in the country. He was a great matinee idol then, you know. . . . You can imagine how excited I was then, when my father wrote he and James Tyrone had become friends, and I was to meet him when I came home from Easter vacation. He showed the letter to all the girls, and how envious they were! My father took me to see him act first. It was a play about the French Revolution and the leading part was a noble man. I couldn't take my eyes off him. I wept when he was thrown in prison—and then was so mad at myself because I was afraid my eyes and nose would be red. . . . And he was handsomer than my wildest dreams, in his make up and his noble man costume that was so becoming to him. . . . I fell in love right then. So did he, he told me after wards. I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist. All I wanted was to be his wife (105).

The marital relation the established thereafter speak of a life long fidelity that precludes happy sexual relation as without it, the happy relation would have lacked the vitality and charm that they have for each other after thirty six years of marital life. However, in such plays as *Desire under Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the marital sexuality is hardly invigorating and even orgasmic. It is marred by failure on the part of the male partner to provide sexual stimulation/erotic interests to the female partner or engage her in meaningful sexual contacts that are capable of sustaining the marital relation and happiness in that relation. On the contrary the post marital conditions that involve persistent lack of erotic interest in the partner give rise to subversive adulterous and incestuous relation in the family that accentuates the conflict and crises to undermine normal familial relation and structure. In *Desire*, old Ephraim Cabot 's marriage with young and sensuous Abbie (his third wife) creates discord in the family, accentuate father- sons rivalry, creates incestuous relation between Eben and Abbie that ends in total chaos in the family involving infanticide, and imprisonment. The marriage lacks the mutuality of feelings for the partners. Cabot brings her to have his sexual gratification, and Abbie looks upon old Cabot as a means to possess his farm when he dies. She has no love for him and the sexual and erotic stimulation is absent in ties with him. In fact the slightest physical contact between them causes Abbie to feel disgust, and makes her "shrink from his touch"(252).Cabot marries to get rid of his growing loneliness in the old age, but her arrival initiates the discord as both Peter and Simons (sons from first wife) decide to leave the farm and settle somewhere in California. The marital sexual discord shows its first symptom when Abbie straightaway shows disinterest in sharing bed and bed room with Old Cabot when she asks, "This here's a nice bed room, Ephraim. It's a r'al nice bed. Is it my room, Ephraim?(224) He has to retort "ourn"(224) that causes strong aversion in Abbie that she can not control.(224). Her lack of sexual; excitement for essential marital sexual bond with the old man is made manifest further when in her first encounter with aggressive, strong, sexually attractive/stimulating Eben (son from second wife) she makes it clear: "You mustn't mind him. He's an old man. ( A pause. They stare at each other) I don't pretend playin' maw t'ye, Eben. . . . I want t' be frens with ye (225). The initial expression of friendship gradually develops into proper sexual relation (incest) that after initial resistance on Eben's part leads to Abbie's impregnation, and Cabot is left to express only in words that he has the strength and manliness at this age that could be satisfying for the young lustful wife, " I'm getting old ripe on the bough. (then with a sudden forced self assurance) Not but what I haint a hard nut to crack even yet\_\_ an fur many a year t' come! (234). Shrewd Abbie capitalizes on this forced expression of manliness to befool him of being capable of producing son at this stage, and she would use this assurance to hide her impregnation through Eben and continue to make him believe that the child that she carries is that of Cabot. Her final disclosure of the child paternal identity after she has smothered it to death speak of the deep underlying hatred and aversion that Abbie carries for this old man, " What right hev ye to question me about him[child]? He wa'nt yewer son! Think I'd have a son by yew? I'd die fust! I hate the sight of ye . . . (264). Thus here O'Neill highlights the need of sexual dimension as a source of family stability and strength. Had Cabot and Abbie entered into meaningful sexual post marital contact and relation, the family would have been spared of the agony of familial discord and conflict that ends at the new born's death. In MBE, the reader once again come across a failure of marital sexual bond and tie that liker *Desire* lead to adultery and

incest ending in death, suicide and severe depressive states ion all the family remembers. Here Christine, the lustful wife of middle aged Ezra Mannon is at the center of sexual and the familial conflict. O'Neill leaves us in no doubt that she is hyper sexual and carries a propensity to achieve liberation in the exercise sexual desires, but the problem is that she is not at all happy in her marital sexual ties with Ezra and in her absence she develops adulterous relation with Adam Brant. She has no hesitation in saying it to Lavinia that she hates Ezra, that leaves Lavinia stunned, and to her horrified expression, Christine says," That relationship has no meaning between us! You've called me vile and shameless! Well, I want you to know that's what I have felt about myself for over twenty years, giving my body to a man I \_" (31). She remembers her wedding night as a horrible moment of pure sexuality and lust deprived of real conjugal bliss, and she regards Lavinia as a product of that lust born out of body without real motherly affection. In her first encounter with the husband on his return form the war, she is vehement in revealing her blankness of emotions for the husband:

You want the truth? You've guessed it! You've used me, you've given me children, but I've never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I could not give! You filled me with disgust!"(61).

This hatred and lack of orgasmic fulfillment drives her to Adam Brant as well as to her son Orin. Her love for Brant finds poetic expression in such words, "He's gentle and tender; he's every thing you've never been. He's what I've longed for all these years with you \_ a lover! I love him! "(61). His murder at the hands of Orin, however, leaves her desires unfulfilled and she driven to madness and subsequent suicide on his death. She has also powerful incestuous inclination for the son Orin. He is her baby, and if he had not gone to war, she would not have turned to Brant saying "when he had gone there was nothing left. But hate and a desire to be revenged – and a longing for love!"(32). She gives vent to her emotions in addressing Orin on his return ". . . we had a secret little world of our own in the old days, didn't we! . . . And that's what your father and Vinnie could never forgive us! But we shall make that little world of our own again, won't we" (85) and for Orin she merges into the mysterious imagery of primitive, sin-free islands. Her entire conduct, her hatred against Ezra and her sexual relation with Adam, however, brings her into direct confrontation with religiously motivated Lavinia that would end in her suicide.

Desire for extra-marital heterosexual contacts and relations is the other area of sexual concern in O'Neill's plays that is, however, is more prominent in women here in O'Neill than in men. Nina Leeds, Christine Mannon and Lavinia are apt illustrations of heterosexual desires and heterosexual gratification through indiscriminate sexual contacts with men. Nina Leeds desire for heterosexuality sexuality springs from her unfulfillment through marriage with Gordon Shaw. His accidental death blocks natural expression of her hyper sexuality, and leaves her shocked and traumatized for the considerable part of her life. O'Neill introduces her appearance as:

Her eyes are beautiful and bewildering, extraordinarily large and a deep greenish blue. Since Gordon's death they have a quality of shuddering before some terrible enigma, of being wounded in their depths and made defiant and resentful by their pain. Her whole manner, the charged atmosphere she give off, is totally at variance with her healthy outdoor physique. It is strained, nerve wrecked, hectic, a terrible tension of will alone maintaining self possession.(13, Vol III)

The death has embittered her towards her father whom she considers responsible for her plight as well as betrayal to Gordon. She calls her, "The professor of dead languages. . . . dead words droning on . . . listening because he is my cultured father. . .(15) . But what she feels on Gordon's death and how desperate she is for his physical touch and sensuality is made obvious in the aside that would also set the pattern of her behavior in the future: Ashes!. . . oh Gordon, my dear one! . . . oh my lips, oh strong arms around me, oh, spirit so brave and generous and gay! . . . ashes dissolving into mud! . . . mud and ashes! . . . that's al! . . . gone! . . . gone forever from me! . . (17). Her desire to be a nurse in military hospital is her first reaction to pursue her desire through heterosexual contacts with soldiers. But the effect is far from sexually gratifying; on the contrary it leaves her exhausted and hollow. Darrel understanding her need for out let of her blocked up emotional life, suggest Marsden to have her marry Sam Evan. But Gordon is wrong in his estimate that Childish Sam would be able t provide her the

necessary outlet, for the reason that he lacks that physical strength in his personality that could help Nina in coordinating his love and embraces to that of dead Gordon. It is Darrel himself, who could fill in the gap and provide the necessary outlet to her pent up sensuality. Gordon's physical strength finds exact equivalence in Darrel. Nina. (*Thinking*) Strong hands like Gordon's . . . take hold of you . . . not like Sam's . . . yielding fingers that let you fall back into you self . . .(79). Secondly, it is Darrel who serves another *Gordon function* properly that Sam has for certain hereditary factor failed to perform. Nina in her earlier torturous lamentation on the death of Gordon expressed her desire to have the feel of Gordon's children. Marriage with Sam initially filled her with the promise of having babes, but Mrs. Evan's disclosure of hereditary insanity in the family leaves her on other option but to abort her desired object i.e baby. "Gordon's spirit" as she feels "followed me from room to room"(71) after the surgery for the abortion. It is this desire that makes her beg to Darrel to impregnate her with a healthy baby. Darrel after his initial repulsion to any such animal type breeding where he has to serve the laboratory role of a guinea pig, agrees to it for what he terms Nina's happiness, "yes-yes, Nina- yes- for your happiness - in that spirit! (89). The experience, though having the ruthlessness of a scientific experiment fills Nina with remarkable euphoria and confidence. "There! . . . that can't be my imagination . . . I felt it plainly . . . life . . .my baby . . . my only baby. . .the other never really lived . . .(90). The euphoria has obvious physical impact on Nina's strained health. It makes her as O'Neill writes "stouter" with "a triumphant strength about her expression, a ruthless self-confidence in her eye"(90). In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Christine as referred above frustrated by her sexual/orgasmic love shows propensity for heterosexuality with Adam and son Orin that accentuates familial discord and ends generates a sequence of death in the family. Lavinia, very religious in thoughts strongly opposes mothers adulterous relation with Adam (in fact her own lover), but once freed from repressive and constrictive Puritanical social and religious order in her visit to the islands exhibits strong and vibrant tendency for heterosexual contacts with opposite male sex. The aim here of course is not to have sex for any reproductive purpose, but to realize the inner urge for sexuality and sexual fulfillment through sexual contacts. As long as she is under deep Puritanical compulsion to act morally that disallows free expression of natural and instinctual desires, she remains in constant conflict with herself and the mother for her adulterous relation with Adam Brant. She constantly argues in favor of strong punishment to the adulterous mother for her faithlessness in marriage to father. But once she is taken to the Island after the terrible deaths in the family involving mother, father and Adam Brant, she reveals her natural self in her inclination to lust and love with naked men on the islands.

Female urge for reproduction/avoidance from reproduction is the other area of concern in O'Neill's treatment of sexuality in his plays. Reproduction is an important and related part of sexuality. In O'Neill one comes across the existence of both the urge for reproductive sexual relations as well as the desire to avoid reproduction in sexual marital contacts, and both have a degree of abnormality associated with them. In Nina Leeds urge for reproduction is to mother a child that forces her as explained above to adopt strange and abnormal/neurotic sexual behavior. In Mary in *Long day's Journey* the reproductive urge is marred by ambivalence. It is marred first by denial and then desire to procreate to blot the guilty of child's death. She had to bear the shock of the death of new born Eugene through infection that made her guilty of being responsible for his death. "I blame only myself" she exhorts. This sense of guilt had its manifestation in her refusal to procreate the other one, "I swore after Eugene died I would never have another baby (87). Her agony is further evident in her terrible expression: "It was my fault. I should have insisted on staying with Eugene and not let you persuade me to join you. . . Above all I shouldn't have let you insist I have another baby to take Eugene place. . . I never should have born Edmund" (88). This thought is based on denial of her duty to procreate. But she had to procreate the next one as she needed the new one to overcome her shattering sense of guilt on the death of Eugene. Edmund's birth, however, is not free from pregnancy and birth complications that she apprehended throughout her pre-natal period: "I knew something terrible would happen"(88), and the birth made her terribly sick that introduced her to life long morphine addiction\_ the remedy that the quack had suggested and in fact administered to relieve her of birth pain. Thus O'Neill highlights abnormal behaviors associated with reproduction side of sexuality.

Male Sexual dysfunction/abstinence and wastefulness is the other concern that the reader consistently comes across in O'Neill's theater. there are plays where the reader come across a condition of sexual dysfunction (not impotency) in the major character in that play, and the reason for this lies

in the complex of that character's sexual propensity to mother as a desired object that leaves the concerned lost in the desired object, feeling her absence/loss to the level of mournfulness, and dreaming of the old days of physical dependence on her breast for gratification of biological and sexual desires/appetites and attachment with the object. In such early play like *Moon for the Carribies* dreamy Smithy reveals his sexual dysfunctionality. His lack of interest in sexuality with the visiting prostitutes on the ship also establishes his oedipal dynamics that has left him averse to sexuality with any other woman for that matter. As Pearl\_ a prostitute\_ approaches him outside the bar on the ship, he shows some inclination to sexuality and "puts her arm around her waist and presses her to him"(III 469), but instantly "he pulls his arms back quickly with a shudder of disgust, and takes a drink", that definitely puzzles Pearl (III. 469). Marsden in *Strange Interlude* is an absolute neurasthenic, and the cause lies in his frustrated oedipal sexual drives and the mother being dead he is left to live a life of constant and painful remembrance of the lost object. In *Hairy Ape*, O'Neill stresses the wastefulness of male sexuality due largely to the impact of absolute and dehumanizing control of the machine over human instincts and desires. The absolute control of the power of machine over the human is made manifest right from the beginning of the play. The first scenes dramatize the dominance of machine through mechanized sounds that has engulfed the workers even in spare time. The description of the sailors gathered in the fore-castle of the liner exemplifies this expressionistic approach. *The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing and confused, inchoate uproar swelling into a sort of unity, a meaning the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage* (I.121). The beastliness of the men is further emphasized in another stage direction, indicating that *the men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes.* The sailors' boisterous mood is matched by "a mechanical, regulated recurrence, a tempo" set by "the monotonous throbbing beat of the engines" (223). Yank in this dehumanizing environment exhibits strong symptoms of wastefulness of male sexuality. Masculinity in fact goes to the machine which is assumed as a "substitute to life giving feminine principle."<sup>28</sup> Yank for instance uses very suggestive sexually charged language for machine:

Yank. . . .Dat's the stuff! Let her have it! All togedder now! Sling it into her! Let her ride! Shoot de piece now Call de toin on her! Drive her into it! Feel her move! . . .Drink it up, baby! Lets see yuh sprint! Dig in and gain a lap! Dere She go-o-es.<sup>29</sup>

This sexually charged language symptomatizes the masculine sexuality that has gone wasteful and slid in wrong, destructive courses. His aggressive attitude is also reflective of Freud's views on the destructiveness of misplaced sexuality. In his discussion on culture Freud frequently refers to the displaced libidinal desires to be the cause of increased aggressiveness and severity of intolerance; "the more man controls his aggressiveness, the more intense his ideal's inclination towards aggressiveness against his ego."<sup>30</sup> The description of Mildred and her aunt, on the other hand, contrasts with what Yank's character suggests. Here in the delineation of these characters lies O'Neill's vision of inert, sapless, lifeless, artificial mechanized culture that contrasts with "the beautiful vivid life of the sea all about."(I.) O'Neill in his stage directions describes Mildred as a "*girl of twenty, slender, with a pale pretty face marred by a self conscious expression of disdainful superiority. She looks fretful, nervous, and discontented, bored by her own anemia.*"(I.) In *All Gods Chillum got wings* O'Neill dramatizes distortion of male-female sexuality due to such powerful determining factor as racism. Black Jim desired white Ella that is initially frustrated by Ella's deep sense of white superiority. But abandoned by her white friend Mickey and having had a child who died of diphtheria, she starts to see Jim again, calling him the "only white man in the world!" (314) whose kindness to her throughout the difficult period, that makes her accept his offer of marriage. Jim as described "has grown into a quietly-dressed studious-looking Negro with an intelligent yet queerly baffled face" (315). They marry and go to France in hope of a better life. For a while, among people less concerned with their racial difference, their life continues to show the impact of earlier racial brought up. This factor is made obvious in their living together as brother and sister more than as husband and wife as Ella shows least inclination to have sexual relation with black Jim.

Prostitution itself is a regressive human conduct under different conditions. Here too one comes



across variations in different plays. In early plays O'Neil uses prostitution to highlight the moral chaos and regression in human behavior. In this way sexuality becomes an indicator of the inner decline or the meaningless routine existence of the concerned, the sailor for instance in *SS Glencairn Series* in their routine and mechanical existence on the board frequently resort to drunkenness and prostitution to have their sense of diversion from the impending sense of gloom and alienation on the sea. In *Anna Christie* for the first time he dramatizes prostitute Anna as a central character. In more mature plays like *Long Day's Journey and Moon*, the concept of mother, whore and lover interchange in the life of oedipal child. In *Moon for the Misbegotten*, this sense of loss has been portrayed in Jamie's relation with the fat Josie. Both Moorton Jr. and Travis Bogard are of the view that Jamie is the other of O'Neill's self. Bogard (1988) writes that Jamie in *Long day's Journey and the Moon* represent the negative, corrupted destructive side of Eugene self portraits (445, 449). James Tyrone in the *Moon* is presented as a cynic, deranged, "rotten bastard" (107) morbidly attached to his mother, yearning for union with her in death. It first drives him to seek the company of the whores, and then to the phantasy figure of Mother/whore Josie. The emphasis in this phantasy figure is of course on the mother. Here he finds the final comfort for his longing for the mother, mothering and maternal gift of peaceful sleep on the desired breasts. The love here is free from sexual gratification and fulfillment. James A. Robinson (1993) terms James relation with Josie "as a mother-substitute" (228). Jamie is thoroughly jealous, who has virtually ruined himself and his brother under the strong impulse of jealousy through drinking and prostituting. Admittance of ruining self through perverse drinking comes in Act Three by no other than the mother when she tells Edmund again, "His drunkenness has virtually ruined him" (110). His bitterness, cynicism and capacity for destroying self springs mainly from his upbringing in the past. Mary blames past for making him so, "It's wrong to blame your brother. He can't help being what the past has made him. Any more than your father can or you or I" (64). Responsibility of what Mary terms upbringing in the past is related strongly to Jamie's need of mother that has driven him to despair and extreme jealousy. His loathing against her, Edmund and himself springs directly from his sense of loss that he suffered on account of Mary's dope addiction and her strong inclinations towards younger brother, Edmund. It is he who calls Mary a "hophead" and who terms her final entrance as "the mad scene. Enter Ophelia!" (170). It is he who would not accept mother taking dope as he says, "I'd never dreamed before that any women but whores took dope" (163). What he feels to be his mother's whore like behavior has left him paralyzed in thought and belief. His entering home with the most unattractive mother like whore Fat Violet as Bogard terms is an attempt to merge maternal whore and mother whose addiction is a whore's addiction ( ).

In O'Neil sexuality is also associated with neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion that may spring from different sex related attitudes. Julia Kristeva has her conception of exhaustion of erotic drives that create such psychological effect that is produced not through repression of sexual desires as is the case in Freudian theory, but through what she calls "disconnection", "(Cont. Aesth. 466) "Appropriated by the object of love-- by the lover or, behind him, the mother whose mourning remains impossible-- the drives are blank, so to speak, emptied of their ability to provide sexual pleasure or of symbolic complicity." Unlike Kristeva, however, who ascribes "disconnection" as the cause of this exhaustion (neurasthenia), the study contends that overindulgence, purposeless involvement, empty contacts for particular time may also cause exhaustion among those involved. In O'Neill, there is hardly a disconnected phase of sexuality. Repression is definitely there, but repression itself does not suggest disconnection. In Freudian observations, it springs mainly for the incestuous libidinal desires/drives, which necessities suppression in the unconscious, thereby generating grave psychopathological defects. But the desires itself remains there. But apart from these repressions in O'Neill, there are practical instances of overindulgence, hyper-sexuality in his personas that unearth the resultant exhaustion/depletion of nerves and even general bearing and health. Characters like Nina in *Strange Interlude*, Orin in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and Jamie in *Long day's Journey and Moon* are guilty of overindulgence in sexuality or the drives with the resultant exhaustion, ennui, and severe despair. They are thus case studies of exhaustion resulting not from disconnection, but from frequent, indiscriminate sexual involvement either in thoughts or in action. Nina's case needs a little elaboration. As explained her sexuality bordering on hyper sexuality initially is tied to the person of Gordon Shaw, and she was anticipating orgasmic love through marriage with him. His accidental death, however, shatters her dream of all that, thereby driving her to promiscuity with hospitalized soldiers in a military hospital where she prefers to work as a nurse. The promiscuity has had her effect on her entire being. Her marital life with Sam Evans and her relation

with Darrel speak of orgasm/pleasure free sexual relation and what Kristeva describes as “ravishment”(466)and the resultant profound mental state of despair, ennui, inactivity and exhaustion (all signifying neurasthenia from overindulgence). Sexual exhaustion thereby, writes Kristeva, creates its own meaningless discourse (466), and the person concerned turns “only towards the hollowness of one’s own proper body that nevertheless is disappropriated of jouissance and sinks into fondness of death of one’s self”(466). Although Kristeva speak of this state with reference to exhaustion resulting from disconnection, but the result is the same in any form of the sexual exhaustion. Nina is “disappropriated” of joyousness in relation with the male, whether her husband Sam or lover Darrel, and there are moments when she sink into state of fondness for death and disgust with life. Likewise Jamie’s behavior in *LDJ* and the Moon for the Misbegotten speak volume of a person, who has lived a life of prostitution and whoring right from the early days of his youth. But the prostitution plus the consistent failure in realizing his incestuous love for the mother has a role in depriving him of essential vitality of life and has stigmatized him as exhausted, bliss less, despaired, Mephistophelian figure. He looks much older than his thirty three. Signs of premature disintegration are obvious on his visage. He lacks Tyrone’s vitality; his hair thinning rapidly with a bald spot in the head; visage carrying cynic expression; and speaking acrimoniously of life and world throughout the play. Behind this lies his prolonged prostitution and indiscriminate over indulgence in sex at the brothels. Orin in *MBE* is the other youth who reveals the disintegrative effect of sexuality on his kind and body. On his first appearance he carries a square-shouldered soldierly bearing, at the end of trilogy he wears a beard like his father, and within a month, ages to the point at which he looks as old as his father in his portrait.

The analysis above highlights the prevalence of regressive sexual behavior in O’Neill’s plays of different periods. Predominantly in all cases the personas suffer from failure to have sexually gratifying relationship in and outside marriage. Generally it assumes the destructive form of lust that extends to family members to assume Freudian incest model. Such an attitude has its negative effect on their social lives as well. It keeps them socially detached or functional that leads to individual isolation and further disintegration. Here characters are brought close to each other to plunge into lustful relation that far from invigorating them set them further apart and leave them exhausted and even psychopathological.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For discussion on human sexuality see John Money, *The Development of Sexuality and Eroticism in Humankind*. The Quarterly Review of Biology, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Dec., 1981),pp. 379-404 Published by: The University of Chicago Press, and Sterling Fishman, *The History of Childhood Sexuality*. Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 17, No. 2, Sexuality in History (Apr., 1982), pp. 269-283.

<sup>2</sup> See Moorton, F. Richard Jr. *The Author as Oedipus in Mourning Becomes Electra and Long Day’s Journey into Night*” in Eugene O’Neill’s Century: Centennial Views on America’s Foremost dramatist, Ed Richard F. Moorton Jr, .London: Greenwood press, 1991, Travis Bogard, refers to Oedipal nature of O’Neill’s own relation with his mother and the fraternal rivalry in such plays as long day’s journey. See his *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O’Neill*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> See Donovan Miyasaki (2003) “The Evasion Of gender in Freudian Fetishism” in *The Journal of Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* , 8.2 ( Fall 2003) , P 89 for commentary on the evasion of gender in these essays on sexuality. Miyasaki writes that “ My primary intention in this paper is to explore, in Freud’s analysis of fetishism, traces of an alternate possibility to oppositional hierarchical gender roles and the negative forms of social relation that rely upon them. While Freud -- in keeping with common opinion -- characterizes sexual fetishism as a distinctly masculine phenomenon, the text also supports a more interesting interpretation: that the non pathological

fetishist evades the construction of gender in terms of sexual roles and that, consequently, fetishism can serve as a critique of Freud's masculine model of sexual instinct and relation".

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