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Female Victor and Male Victims: A Gender Reading of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*

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By

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The thesis entitled " Female Victor and Male Victims: A Gender Reading of the *Strange Interlude*" by Raju Dhakal submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

The research explores the victimization of males of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* in a newer light. It studies the dream screen of the protagonist, Nina in which she shows strange kind of abnormal activities towards men. Thus, female in this way are made a victorious party by presenting themselves as a strange and in an unfathomable status. Sam, her husband to whom she doesn't want to stay and Gordon, the wealthy businessman to whom she secretly behaves like a husband. Not only them but also Evan and Marsden are guided by her activities to their every step of life. Thus, every male becomes victim whereas female becomes victor.

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I. Introduction

The research work is primarily designed to explore the victimization of males by female's ideology. In it males are sexually infatuated by female incantation and they indulge the sexually delicate male's desire in a circle of toxic feminist. O'Neill reconfigures the traditional concept of masculinity and femininity in his drama *Strange Interlude*, which shows the beauty and beast "Nina combines both the qualities of beauty and beastliness through her male characters. This is the consequence of her shameful marriage to the first lover Sam and choosing Evan as a second husband secretly. She has been mentally and physically choosing every male which gives her power to control the males in her whole life. She runs over the spell of violence, unleashed by the overpowering sense of interlude and changes into female, one of those supernatural beings" (9).

Her monstrosity is evident both in her looks and in her behavior. She develops a habit of tearing all males one by one and finally after her escapade from the confinement contrived jointly to her all male characters and compels to being dilemma between life and death. So Nina is a strong girl whose life is full of interlude, who is always ready to heave all males for the purpose of her own wish.

Traditionally, since patriarchal time women had in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constituted numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing was not imposed of necessity by natural feminine characters but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. They were expressed to be beautiful, submissive and tender, sacrificing their

personal desire and identity for the betterment of their husband, family and society. They had to comply with the rules and principles of modesty and myth of feminist. One the other side of issue, the same women would be labeled as wicked, monstrous and mad if they failed to conform to the patriarchal mainstream pattern of life. If women try to assert their individuality and violation, they were sure to be termed aberrations or misfits in the society. Thus, we have two sets of imagery for women in the majority of literature informed by patriarchal society.

But, genuine expectations are doubtless becoming at present more numerous than formerly. A large proportion of wealth and property is held in women's names can easily be shown to uphold rather than to disprove the author's intentions. A good many human do success in attaining positions of professional independence, and some of them nevertheless marry sooner or later. The meaning refers here to only one relevant matter of perennial discussion, the question of whether women's higher education should be different from that of men in its greater emphasis on domestic science. Thus, veins of male domination are found but female are seen rebellious, superior, better and progressive.

Strange Interlude goes against the expectation of the readers of conformist literature by portraying its female character in roles that they are defiant and rebellious. They are violent and beast or the sharp weapon of victor as the characterization of Nina. She always runs over the very innocence male characters to control their wish and desire that they have. Likewise Nina Leeds, a passionate, tormented woman whose fiancé was killed in World War I and who spends the remainder of her life searching for always an elusive happiness. Nina is a strong willed women determined to love mother, if needed be destroyed the many men who intersect her orbit. The plot is pure and in its later stages laughable. As Nina toys with

the dashing doctor Edmund Darrell, the jovial advertising man Sam Evan. Males face nervous breakdowns, promiscuity and adultery, care of congenital insanity and designed paternity, as well as enough sudden deaths of stock a reason of *Dynasty*. O'Neill hoped that this drama would turn the manipulative, ever changing Nina into a vessel for all his addled conflicted thoughts about womanhood. When the theme dies, another survives. In *Strange Interlude*, the female characters are constantly trying to create happiness by controlling and ordering the life of males; even a baby is eugenically conceived yet such schemes are always undone by unruly emotions, No matters; how much Nina meddles and calculates to get what she wants, she ultimately finds that "our lives are merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God the father" (4) looked at somberly, as O'Neill apparently wished such futile thrashing against destiny could be considered tragic. But they couldn't be seen as absurdly funny. O'Neill uses the language of too purple to support breast-beating, can sustain a sardonic tone with no loss of meaning. The play reveals incomprehensible awful secret. In the play he develops complex issue of past and present in gender roles. It traces character's inner thoughts are often spoken out loud, unheard by the other characters and interspersed with their audible dialogues, a development that appears to allow the audience into the secret worlds of the characters.

Strange Interlude (1928), by American dramatist Eugene O'Neill, was a huge success when first produced by the Theatre Guild at the John Golden Theatre in New York City in 1928. It won the Pulitzer Prize and has become the most successful American play till to date. The play covers a period of twenty-five years in the lives of mostly upper-middle class east coast characters. It centers on Nina Leeds, a passionate tormented woman. It is a controversial play because it deals openly with such topics as Gender. Although it was rarely revived in the 2000s, it was generally

regarded as the first O'Neill's work in which he revealed his full power as a dramatist. By using that sort of strong female character O'Neill tries to show the unnecessary guides and rules that are given to the males by the females in the age of modernism. The time is just apposite what the reader thinks. All think, females are dominated by males but this is not true. Now males are absolutely dominated by the female with the name of sex and love. Sex and love is the sharp weapon of female which guides all males in their own wish. The political dimension of the play can't be missed in its very many utterances against the social codes which would consign the female character to the superior and at best a decorative or spicy role. In the age of capitalism women are conscious about their beauty and sex. However, it is the play of the woman which gets the greater weight age. O'Neill has effectively subverted the master narrative of Euro-American andocentric practice of representing woman as always weak characters however rescue is ensured by some charmed and charming prince or knight. The play is decidedly masculinity as its heart though some instances of misogyny are present of O'Neill is that he has ventured upon a way of dealing with the concern and stories of men. The very fact that he has written about men and their plight something is uncommon in the light of the literature. The play legitimizes him for his masculinity authorial enterprise.

The male character in the play that most embodies desire is Nina Leeds. The play revolves around her relationships with the various men in her life, Father, Fatherly figure, Romantic ideal, Husband, Lover and Son. It is her need to fulfill every aspect of herself as a woman that drives the male. The god for these obsessions on the part of Nina is her anger and guilt which she feels because she is allowed pre-marital sex to thwart the flow of her desire for Gordon. All her men are a part of this passionate quest, which is at times touched with a kind of mysticism. Nina is

searching for what is popular parlance, might be called her inner goddess. Nina wants to believe in a deity that is more in harmony with her being as a woman than the distant, punitive God the father of Judeo-Christian tradition. For Nina, this female deity is associated with procreation and with the great rhythms of the cosmos. One of Nina's happiest moment comes when she is pregnant with Darrell's child, she becomes a part of God, the mother in a vision of unity and peace. Being pregnant is a kind of victory for Nina as she can trap men into her fist. All the male characters are helpless in the grip of female ideology. Their plight crystallizes in another of those fleeting cosmic moments when Nina seems to become larger than life and sees herself as an embodiment of the universal mother god who absorbs the many into the one. They all are aware of her desire and her desire dominates and absorbs them in a kind of maternal womb. Although all have an emotional attachment to Nina, it is not sexual one. According to her, sexually all are undeveloped and in that sense they are always beyond desire. The reason in her sexual abstinence is a combination of latent homo sexuality and unfortunate encounter with a prostitute as a teenager, a naturally refined sensibility and a neurotic attachment to her son. All males are afraid of life, afraid of grappling with the really deep issues. When Marsden is in Europe he is unable to write because the issues are too large for him to deal with her, this is also what we call victimization of male Ideology before her. Males are shocked by her promiscuous behavior. The play is strong to explore a dirty family secret thumbs about like a hooked fish.

Many critics regard *Strange Interlude*, as a play excessively dwelling in illusion. Miller and Wilmeth examine the play in relation to the concepts of desire, power and adultery. They bring in the reference to push and power which dominates desire but is activated as per the need and invocation of gods who fails to conquer

demonic forces. Commenting upon the play, Miller and Wilmeth say, "*Strange Interlude* on its tale desire, adultery and power, the production was intriguing as it revealed fully not only the characters speech but also their thoughts" (320).

The observation of Wilmeth and Miller is based on the study of the mind of the characters in which their behavior; they are seen as behaving to reveal their internal excitements. But the play not only exposes the characters thought and speech rather goes into the depth of power of female sexuality. Tamsen W.C Wolf studies *Strange Interlude* with the relationship between past and present, the thoughts that people think are never the same as the words speak. Further commenting on the play Tamsen W.C Wolf says:

In *Strange Interlude* O'Neill develops complex relationships between past and present on stage. Eugenic insistence on the visibility and force of the past in the embodiment present offered a ready resource. O'Neill also shared with eugenicists an abiding concern with visibility and spectatorship. In eugenic theory, there is a vital tension between hidden truth and visible truth or dominant genetic history displayed on the body. (2)

The eugenic and hereditary study tries to reveal the domination of past throughout the play. The recurrent of the past is what makes the characters difficult and more complex. Here he merges with eugenics, the idea of hereditary improvement by controlling selective breeding of his name. It is a caustic play. Similarly, another critic Kruch J. wood criticizes the play in an objective way:

Strange Interlude, O'Neill had tried to tell as an objective story dealing with the relation of recognizable contemporaries with God but

it is vague and inconclusive like the characters conception of that relationship. It tracks passionate directness in their own souls and for this reason the personages lack grandeur no less than the action itself lacks tragic elevation. (105-106)

Krutch criticizes *Strange Interlude* in relation to the concepts of God who brings unhappiness in the family. But the evil in the family isn't the cause of God but a same member in the family. Thus the unhappiness in the family of Sam is not brought by the God but by Nina. Likewise another critic Frank Rich says:

The *Strange Interlude* has always seemed the form of expression best suited to a heroic age and the hovel the from best suited to a complex and baffled one, since a certain simplicity of presentation has been inseparable from play writing. The production of play has implied both a story elementary enough to be recounted almost on the form of an anecdote and a view of human life uncomplicated enough to be presented almost without shadings. While the modern mind has found itself unable to express its reaction without the infinite qualification and the subtle half thoughts which its most characteristic literary form makes possible and while, in the hands of its masters. (112)

The critic Frank Rich criticizes *Strange Interlude* as a play of desire which is never fulfilled. The entire thing in the life is an anecdote and natural not real. The thought of the human being can't be succeeded in his life. Frank Rich has purred his strength of critical responses reflection his own perception on strange interlude. Similarly another critic Richard Gilman says:

Strange Interlude has most atrocious written and ill-conceived play; a family secret thumps about like a hooked fish. What most consistently stumped contemplation review was the pivotal, seemingly ludicrous threat of hereditary insanity in the play. (14)

Thus, critics have poured their strength of critical responses reflection their own perception on *Strange Interlude*. Some of them pass through the edge of the issue but have not attempted to explore the core that the research deals with. They all value the play for its strong treatment of women. Women are endowed with the capacity to act upon and even against men. They are portrayed as capable of manipulating their opposite sex. This thesis rests on the fundamental assumption that a male writer has produced a feminist work of literature by daring to treat the history of a nation by presenting the story of the women there. This also intends to explicate how *Strange Interlude* by conferring the power of volition and action to its male character goes against the dominant practice of characterizing the males as the weaker beings.

The male are made puppet in the hand of female flirt as female frees herself from the family bond by leaving her child in care of men in *Strange Interlude*. Female again keeps the men in a roundabout of her deception. Thus female in this way are made a victorious party by presenting themselves as a strange, liberated and unfathomable status, and the male ideology falls victim of female domination.

This dissertation has built up this thesis in four divisions or chapters beginning with introduction, critical method, textual analysis and conclusion. Each chapter is interlinked with the other chapters, so the division will function as a methodological convenience rather than as a rigid and specific compartmentalization. The totality of

the thesis is to read, analyze and reveal the masculinity and feminist concern as expressed in the play *Strange Interlude* in terms of characterization, narration and authorial comments interspersed here and there.

It is guided by the conceptual consciousness of masculinity and feminism that brand of feminism known as radical feminism and its effect on masculinity. It studies and interprets the play *Strange Interlude* as a text that gives recognition to the common life of male kind by recounting their experience and stories of full life. The images of gender become an area of interest for this thesis, as do the roles assigned to the genders. It focuses on one particular character, Nina who always rounds about her three men and always keeps them under her. To be born a male is a matter of hesitation, the play presents because to be male means to lack power. This conceptualization by the common people, in case of the drama, the American individual, is at the heart of the social- political critique the play makes. This is how this thesis reads the play *Strange Interlude* as a masculinity text.

This thesis makes a study of the concepts of gender so that it would be pertinent to examine the play as a reverse rewriting of the same. But O'Neill does away with this trend and depicts men as cunning, even immoral according to the feminist yardstick of morality, destructive and hungry for the full desire to express their autonomy. In this respect, Michael Kaufman says: "the construction of masculinity and the Triad of men's violence" (51), a much acclaimed and pivotal work in the field of modern masculinity discourse would be a reference point for this theoretical underpinning, and concepts such as males study would be relevant in this section for further application while reading the play.

This thesis is divided into four chapters for the convenience. It is divided into subtopics as and when necessary. The first chapter states the hypothesis of the thesis and gives general background information about the playwright and his writing. The hypothesis is forwarded and elaborated in this very section.

The second chapter is for discussing the conceptual tools with which the play is analyzed. Here, the thesis presents the concept of masculinity and feminism. It is also discussed the conceptual obverse of them, that is radical feminism and traditional masculinity, and the technique of rewriting of the play so as to question the traditionally accepted but too simplistic and gender biased stereotypical images of men as incomplete human beings.

The third chapter analyses the play and shows in detail the ways it is a pertinent text from the point of view of masculinity awareness. It presents several references, with elaboration and their textual context, so as to reveal and support the hypothesized masculinity stand of the play. This chapter explains how Sam's case can meaningfully be read as representation of men as an enraged prisoner. Hence, the childlike beauty of the simple and frail character controls every male's ideology by using sex and love is endangered by the beast, but in the play, the beauty and the beast are combined in same persona. These two things are the superior which guides all males every time.

The fourth chapter concludes the thesis explaining how the thesis has maintained its hypothesis with necessary textual evidences. This chapter proves the play *Strange Interlude* is an authentic masculinity text, it questions the accepted but unfounded norms of gender inequality that has emerged through the valorization of female perspectives and positions of the cost of the male values. Gender roles are

social constructs, not naturally traits, so they can be negotiated and even disrupted as the beast working under Nina proves.

II. Gender Studies

Gender studies is a field of study which analyzes the phenomenon of gender. It examines both cultural representations of gender and people's lived experience. Gender study is sometimes related to studies of class, race, ethnicity and location or geography. Study of gender has been undertaken in many academic areas, such as literary theory, performance theory, anthropology, sociology and psychology and psychoanalysis. These disciplines sometimes differ in their approaches to how and why they study gender. For instance in anthropology, sociology and psychology, gender is often examined. Gender studies is also a discipline in itself, it is an interdisciplinary area of study.

In Gender studies the term gender is used to refer to the social and cultural constructions of masculine and feminine. It does not refer to biological difference, but rather to social context. The field emerged from a number of different areas; the sociology of 1960s and later the theories of the psychoanalyst; (Lacan and his disciples) and the work of feminists such as (Judith Butler). Each field came to regard gender as a practice, sometimes referred to as something that is performativity of gender the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir says: "One is not born a woman; one becomes one "(54).

Gender, viewed from a feminist perspective, is used to dominate women, gender is nothing more than the division of sexuality and men's domination over women. Sexuality constitutes gender, not vice versa. As Catherine Mackinson says:

Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender, as socially constructed

embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender

made into the sexes, as we know them, by the social requirements of

Heterosexuality, which institution arise male sexual dominance and
Female sexual submission. It this is true, sexuality is linchpin of gender
Inequality. (Freedman 60)

Gender studies provide a framework for describing how ideas and assumptions about biological sex and gender influence the political, social and cultural construction of gender identities. It provides a framework for understanding, describing and defining how ideas and assumptions about gender influence every personal and professional aspect of human life. It supports effort to achieve diversity in education and business and prepares students to meet the challenge of diversity in every profession. Some feminist critics have dismissed the work of Sigmund Freud as sexist, because of his view that women are mutilated and must learn to accept their lack of a penis. Karen Horney was one of the first to question the theory of penis envy. She argues: "it is the actual social subordination of women that shapes their development not to lack of the organ, but of the privilege that goes with it" (25). The way in which an individual excludes their mother as means of forming an identity is similar to the way in which societies are constructed. It contends that patriarchal culture like individuals have had to exclude the maternal and the feminine so that they can come into being. In the same way, the concept of gender performativity is at the core and the performance of gender, sex and sexuality is about power in society. It locates the constructions of the gender, sex, desiring subject in regulative discourses. Gender study concerns the role of sex in the construction of natural or coherent gender and sexuality. Both gender and sexuality are constructed as natural became the opposition of the male and female sexes are constructed as natural.

Gender studies focuses upon gender identity and gendered representations as central category of analysis. Gender studies use the concept of gender to analyze a wide range of disciplines. Although lines of argumentation in gender studies are inspired by feminism, a broad variety of theoretical approaches are used to study the categories of gender. Gender studies include woman's studies, men's studies, and, gay and lesbian studies. However, sex, gender identity and sexual identity refer to different aspects of oneself. Therefore one may be any combination of sex (male/female), gender (masculine/feminine), and sexual identity (straight, bisexual, lesbian/ gay). In recent history, people oppressed on the basis of different sexual identities (bio-sexual, lesbians, gay men) and people oppressed on the basis of gender identity have formed communities which are partly separate and partly over-lapping with one another. Because of this historic separation, someone who is a member of one of these communities doesn't necessarily understand and prioritize the issue of others of these communities. Gender identity refers to how one thinks of own gender; whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine). Society prescribes arbitrary rule or gender roles (how one is supposed to and not supposed to dress, act, think, feel, relate to others, think of one, etc) based on one's sex. These gender roles are called feminine and masculine. Anyone who doesn't abide by these arbitrary roles may be targeted for mistreatment ranging from not being included in people's circle of friends, through the verbal harassment, assault, rape and murder based on one's gender identity. Sexual identity refers how one thinks of oneself in term of which one is sexually and romantically attracted.

In this light, Gender studies take over the feminist agenda by studies on masculinity, which results in transferring from feminist faculty positions to other kinds of positions. There have been cases of positions advertised a 'gender studies'

being given away to the bright boys. Some of the competitive take over has to do with gay studies of special significance in this discussion is the role of the mainstream, is responsible for the promoting gender as a way of deradicalizing the feminist agenda, remarking masculinity and gay male identities instead many of the men in the academy who are feminism's most supportive allies are gay and that is disingenuous to ignore the ways in which mainstream persons have promoted feminist theorists.

The relation between sex and Gender is fraught with confusion and live of argument goes that sexual characteristics are fixed as per the law of nature and therefore account for gender role arrangements. That is, since men and women are differently endowed by nature, their duties and capacities also differ. But others, especially the ones armed with the latest theories of nature controversy deny such simplistic differentiation between the two. Gender is not the name as sex, the biological fact; it is composed of a set of socially defined character traits. It is a discipline that philosophizes, theorizes and politicizes on the nature of the female gender as a social construct to the point of excluding the male gender from analysis. It also asserts that the 'gender' in gender studies is routinely used as a synonym for 'women', that men are studied as the sex that created the problem of 'gender' in the first place and men are studied only as a female victimizers.

Feminism and Femininity

Feminism, the ideology that supports uplifting the status and improving the rights of women, has been one of the most influential political ideas of the nineteenth and twentieth century's. Since its inception, it has been both hailed as a profound liberation of society and condemned as a philosophy of victimhood, responsible for the breakdown of the nuclear family and the degradation of society in general. There

is no doubt, however, that the work of feminist activists and reformers has been responsible for enormous improvements in the position of women in the United States over the past 200 years. Equally indisputably, a glance at the power structure of most of the world's governments and businesses shows that male dominance is still very much a reality. In spite of this, feminism has changed the American social order, from the superficial, such as media portrayals of women, to the deepest underlying assumption of science and religion.

Feminism is social theory and a political movement primarily informed and fuelled by the experience of women. Inaugurated by such critical minds as Mary Wollstonecraft and Germaine Nicole de Sainte-Beuve, this movement was later strengthened by Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. Simply put, feminism can be understood as a doctrine which advocates equal rights and dignity for women vis-à-vis men. Feminism acquired a more or less concrete set of beliefs in the nineteenth century articulating the thesis that women are inherently equal to men in every way conceivable. As a concerted social and political movement that went global, feminism got momentum in the twentieth century. The aim of this movement can be designed as spiritual as it seeks to establish a human society based on the mutual understanding and respect between the two sexes.

Feminism questions why women have been consigned to a subservient status in relation to men and explains the social system controlled and constructed by men as the cause behind women's subordination. It also studies how women's lives have changed throughout history. Also, one of its central concerns is, to explore how woman's experience is different from that of men's, either as a result of Michael Ryan's writer of "an essential ontological or psychological difference or as a result of historical imprinting and construction" (10). The guiding norms of patriarchy to the

extent that they make unfounded claims about the inferiority of women are called into question by this awakened social political movement called feminism. Karen E. Rowe writes that they “encourage women to internalize only aspirations deemed appropriate to ‘our’ real sexual functions within a patriarchy” (Rowe 211).

A milestone in the rise of modern feminism was Simone de Beauvoir’s book *The second sex* which raised feminism consciousness by appealing to the idea that liberation for men too. Feminism sought to achieve greater freedom for woman to work and to remain economically and psychologically independent of men if they chose. Feminists criticize society’s prevailing emphasis on women as objects of sexual desire and sought to broaden both women’s self- awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men. Another of feminism’s aim was to advance women’s participation in political decision-making and all areas of public life.

Feminism is the first theory to emerge from those whose interest it affirms. Its method recapitulates as theory the reality it seeks to capture. Feminism is the theory of power and its distribution, inequality. Feminism provides account of how social arrangements of patterned disparity can be internally rational yet unjust. Feminism argues that analyzing society exclusively in class terms ignores the distinctive social experiences of the sexes, obscuring women’s unity. Feminists have often found that working class movements and the left undervalue women’s work and concerns; neglect the role of feelings and attitudes in a focus on institutional and material change; practice and everyday life. De Beauvoir writes, “Like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from, their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth” (53). Feminism has not been perceived as having a method or even a central argument with which to contend. It has been perceived not as a systematic

analysis but as a loose collection of factors complaints and issues taken together, describes rather than explain the misfortunes of the female sex. The challenge is to demonstrate that feminism systematically converges upon a central explanation of sex inequality through an approach distinctive to its subject yet applicable to the whole of social life, including class. Feminist raise some issues began with a broad unmaking of the attitudes that legitimize and hide women's status, the identical envelop that contains woman's body: notions that woman desire and provoke rape.

Patriarchy and Effects of Stereotypes

A society can be called patriarchal to the extent it valorizes male values at the cost of female perpetuate the domination of women at the hands of men. This sociological and anthropological meaning retains its relevance in the political and philosophical movement of feminism too. Feminist would like to content that patriarchy would refer not simply to a society where men hold power , but rather to a society ruled by a certain kind of men wielding a certain kind of men wielding a certain kind of power . And such a society reflects the deep-rooted values of traditional male ideal. In this sense, patriarchy denotes a culture whose central and driving ethos is an embodiment of male or rather masculine ideals and practices conforming to those ideals. Patriarchy has determined to a considerable and virtually indelible extent the nature and quality of human societies across the world, irrespective of time and space, the values and priorities, and the place and image of women within the societies, and the relation between the sexes. Feminism, therefore, as socio-political movement which aspires to enhancing healthy and just relation between the two sexes, has to expose how masculinity ideals has been dehumanizing and subordination women on the basis of grossly unfounded myths and norms.

The males know well how easy it is to control women by the mere strategy of mind control. To inculcate certain belief, to indoctrinate the women into believing their inherent fragile, sentimental and altruistic nature to continuously remind them of their secondary and subservient status ever since the creation of human beings by God-these all are the tools of mind control. To give constancy and currency to such brain- washing and mind-controlling precepts, stereotypes are formulated and given currency. Stereotypes images based on limited experience of one time but accepted as true ever after serve the great purpose of the men in subjugation the women. The stereotypical images of women are stamped and circulated as truths have been destructive to the self images and esteem of women. These myths and stereotypes function as social norms, and direct the attitudes and conducts of both the male and the females in the society. What is problematic with the female stereotype is that it forces, rather indoctrinates in many instances, the women not only to appear and accept that they are substandard, but to become substandard so that they can gain approval of the society as the embodiment of ideal women. And the social factors help sustain and enhance such an ideal. Limited education, experience, and critical faculties-deemed ideal for women because they are not expected to be wise in the ways of the world, or to compete with the men-along with the demand that women be delicate and attractive body to be desirable for male consumption, and countless other influences collude in the masculine mega scheme of persuading the women to believe the myth and act accordingly. Explaining how much pressure such myths, stereotypes and curbs exert upon female in twisting and narrowing their intellectual and moral qualities, Mary Wollstonecraft writes in her landmark critical text *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).

Females, in fact denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as

Married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally draw from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts through the private duty of any other member of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil and civil oppression, sentiments become events, reflections deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range.(398)

Women are deprived of the right to natural expression of their psychological and physiological needs and drives. They are expected to live up to the images men have conjured about them. This all eventually creates a diseased and unnatural personality in women. The influence of stereotypes and the need to live accordingly destroys the humanity in females. This is what Simone de Beauvoir also notes in "Myth and Reality" section of *The Second Sex*:

. . . as against the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless. If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behavior of flesh and blood women, it is the latter that are wrong: we are told not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine. (996)

So, powerful is the myth of femininity that the females are forced into complying with the myths. Otherwise they would be termed aberrations, but the myths would never be questioned as to their authenticity. One of the most powerful myth produced by men against women is the myth of the 'us' and 'them'. The 'self' and the 'other'; The men are the natural component of humanity; whatever they see, say or do is right and universal. Their mode of acting and thinking is the human mode, the right mode of thinking; but the female mode of perception is merely of the female. But in reality, both men and women are of the same category in their nobility and weakness as human beings. The effort of the men to establish and claim superiority over women is spurious. We can see now that myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man. The myth of women is a luxury. It can appear only man escapes from the urgent demands of his needs; the more relations are correctly lived, the less they are idealized. Commenting upon the false notion of feminine mystery and the usefulness of the same mystery for the men, Beauvoir writes, ". . . surely most of the myths had roots in the spontaneous attitude of man towards his own experience and toward the world around him"(999). so, the real issue is not what is true but how much the patriarchal mode of perception damages the personality of the women.

Given those odds against their success in life, it is hardly surprising that so few women come to be counted as successful personages in life. These accounts for the relatively backward position women occupy in every public domain in comparison to men. How can one expect women to be somebody with their distinct mark in a field when what the society and family confines the definition of good women to those who are beautiful and attractive, fragile, domestic and self-effacing- that is, ready to renounce themselves for the integrity of their family and the honor of their husbands?

The masculine images of women and the roles that these images support are constructed so as to create a situation many ways very convenient for men. Women are expected to help and serve men physically, taking care of their homes, property, clothing or persons; economically, doing numerous household chores for which women are paid so little or not paid at all; sexually, as wives, mistresses, or prostitutes who satiate men's sexual needs; and productively, assuring men of their family line, the continuity of dynasty. The image of women as man's complement offers an extremely effective support mechanism for the masculinity self-image: the softer, weaker, and more dependent the woman is, the stronger and more powerful the man appears; the more servant the woman, the more masters the man. Hence, the complicity of the patriarchal social pattern is sustaining and propagating such stereotypical images.

Radical Feminism

The fundamental difference radical feminism hold with other isms included in feminism is it's thesis that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form, the most radical form of suppression. Since these feminists viewed the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, they came to be nomenclature as the radical feminists. As they propounded, the situation of women as subordinate to that of men was universal: women-irrespective of class, culture, and race-were abused oppressed and deprived of human dignity throughout the globe. In this context the term 'radical feminism' emerged in the late 1060s in the wake of the civil rights peace movements in America. This movement is also called 'get to the roots' movement.

Radical feminism enjoyed a wide currency and clout for a decade in the seventies. It was accepted as the only true feminism during that period. Buttressed

strongly with the conviction that women are of absolute positive values, radical feminists question the system of patriarchy which has been a strong tool for the men to oppress women. Patriarchy, in their view, is the Pandora's Box, the source of all evil and violence in society. To radical feminists, patriarchy is “the least noticed and yet the most significant structure of social inequality” (Engelmann and Brantley 462). Patriarchy remains in power because it has gone deep down the psychic unconscious of both males and females. It prevails in such ideas as fashion and beauty, marriage and motherhood, chastity and virility. The radicals believe that patriarchy, the biggest mechanism of women’s subjugation, can be challenged and overthrown by awakening women’s consciousness. Only through awakening them up, women can be able to come out of the spell of patriarchy which has been a crippling spell on them.

Lesbianism, as the radical feminists believe, is one of the ways to subvert the domination of the patriarchal system. Through lesbianism, they argue, women move away from patriarchal domination to the realm where they can love person from their own kind. Lesbianism also provides the ground to the feminists to contend that women can exist and can have a fulfilled existence too despite their distance from the males.

Radical feminism is also centered on the necessity to question gender roles. In this respect, it can be compared and identified with the current “gender politics” which questions why women are supposed to assume certain roles based on their biology, and by the same logic, why men adopt certain roles based on their biology, and by the same logic, why men adopt certain roles based on theirs. It is the foremost job of the radical feminists to differentiate the biologically determined functions and behavior from the culturally determined ones so that both the sexes will have the scope to free themselves from the narrowly determined gender roles. It is not that it is

only women who would be emancipated from this kind of skepticism of gender roles; the men too would have a wider space to do act as they feel if this stereotypical gender role construction is critically reviewed. One burning example, in Nepal context, is that men are not supposed to weep- for it is a symptom of weakness, therefore of femininity, to weep. But men are prone to the same kinds of emotions as women are? The male kinds ever feel the need to weep.

The power is exclusive to men. If women exercise any power emanating from their sexuality, that power is precarious at the best, always at the mercy of men. This power is a disadvantaged privilege which ultimately cripples the human personality in women. To elucidate by example, a woman is more adept at looking after a baby or a sick person. This very skill renders her a mere caretaker either as mother or wet mother, or as a nurse. He is deprived of the right to act like a father or a doctor. In heterosexuality, men occupy the first or upper position. Lesbianism, on the other hand, provides a space for female love for female. In the postmodern era, it is argued that lesbianism does not mean women are prone to having sex with women. But rather women are declined to having sex with men. As freedman argues, “the very essence, definition and nature of heterosexuality is men first”(61). Heterosexuality has reinforced men’s supremacy over women. Women who had sex with men were supposed to be surrendering themselves to the dominance of men. Therefore, lesbianism had to be preferred with its enlarged scope. Adrienne Rich, a noted feminist poet and critic, explains the new terrains of lesbianism:

If we expand (lesbianism) to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support (...)

we being to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited lesbianism. (Qtd. In Freedman 62)

The bond between females, rather than the one between males and females, is prioritized by lesbian feminists. In the context of the play *Strange Interlude*, the deep bond among the three male character works as a strong defiance of the feminist.

Men's Studies

Men's studies also sometimes called masculinity studies; is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning men, gender and politics. As a relatively new field of study, men's studies was formed largely in response to and as a critique of an emerging men's rights movement –Itself a response to both the real and perceived advantages brought to women by feminism political action. It has only been taught in an academic setting since the 1970s. In many universities men's studies is a correlate to or part of a larger women's studies or gender studies program and as such it's faculty tends to be sympathetic to or engaged in feminist politics. Men's studies programs and courses often included contemporary discussions of men's rights, feminist theory, queer theory, and patriarchy and more generally, the social, historical and cultural constructions of men and virility. They often discuss the issues surrounding the changing forms of male privilege and clear gender roles in light of the feminist movement. Importantly, scholars engaged in the field of men's studies tend not to agree that; this anxiety is justified and analyze the socio-historical institutions and attitudes that have led men to assume that their power and authority should be necessarily greater than, or at least necessarily different from, that of women.

Masculinity is in part the mistaking of male perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, standards and values and perceptions for all human perceptions. Masculinity has been the root cause behind women's social and intellectual disenfranchisement. And the major problem with this is that masculinity is unconsciously embedded even in the female psyche. As Sheila Ruth writes, "the goal of feminism acquires the status of a supremely noble ideology, a sort of spiritual dignity" (582). As she records the goals of feminism are : to change women's sense of themselves, to change women's aspirations, based on an increased sense of worth and right, their presence in the world, to alter the relations between women and men to create true friendship and respect between the sexes in place " the war between the sexes" (9), to give all people, women and men, a renewed sense of human worth, to restore to the center of human endless, justice and quality in living; to reaffirm in society the quest for harmony, peace and humane compassion.

The American men studies association traces the root of an organized field of men's studies to the early 1980s and the work of scholars involved in an anti sexist organization called the men's studies Task Groups of the National organization for men against sexism (NOMAS), Shepherd Bliss, Harry Broad. Sam femiano, Martin Fiebert and Michael messner. However, men's studies classes also pre-date and a small were taught in various colleges across the united states throughout the 1970s.

The powerful communal feeling passing between men can become changed with desire and it is the task of the fatherly abbot to set an example, to hold their psychic energies in check and to sublimate any last trace of homoeroticism into productive work. The nobility of male idea is compromised by a deep division between the need for mastery or control that will create order out of chaos and fear of the potentially flow of energy. For Carlyle:

Maleness, potentially progressive, is also innately diseased. The very spring of male identity is also potentially the source of its destruction as dissolution. Repelled by the male body, by male sexuality, by what he sees as the miasmatic swamp of the male psyche, Carlyle imagines the interior of the male as polluted, unclean. Masculine energy may power the energy of industrial society but it may also disrupt it in a power surge, an overflow of the diseased fluid interior in a flood that would dissolve the ego boundaries of the male self and the patriarchal bounds of the social system.

(Sussman 1995:24)

Masculinity comprises culturally of the traits assigned to the male in various contemporary world. It is the measure of performance in a gender role associated with male. Traits often associated with masculinity have their roots in the genetic predispositions of male which are supported, contributed to, celebrated and often exaggerated by cultural and social constructs. Therefore masculinity can mean different things to cultures, there are often very common aspects to its definition across cultures. The most obvious example of this is the idea that to act in an effeminate manner reduces a male's masculinity. Masculinity requires "a discriminating class, but is only a matter of birth and breeding of what one is, not of what one achieves; it's highest goal is the nation, yet some nations, including his own are prone to excessive national feeling, falling into vulgar and falling to give the enemy of his due" (52). This masculine ideal was intimately connected to the growth of a commercial and industrial bourgeoisie throughout Western Europe but, far from being a wishful self-portrait of one particular social class, it is a complex amalgam of beliefs and practices drawn from many sources, some old and some new. Therefore masculinity requires intense effort. A man must struggle against himself, even

conceiving of his own body as a sort of enemy and also against others. Most men feel pressured to act masculine. These men feel that they have to prevail the situations that requires physical strength and fitness.

Due to its relative newness and the debate over the purpose or mission of men's studies, the boundaries and subjects of men's studies are always under debate and constantly changing. This is also due to the fact that many male and female scholars of men's studies have varied and often disagreeing politics, including feminism, pro-feminism, the men's movement, men's rights advocacy, the mythopoetic men's movement, and masculinity. Ironically, a minority of men's studies scholars also figure the loss of male privilege as a form of male oppression, pointing to women's superiority in reproductive freedom and chance, as well as archaic attitudes towards child custody and domestic violence laws that criminalize men without a jury trial. Despite this, the majority still identifies as feminist or pro-feminists and hold that whatever gains have been made by women are still dwarfed by feminists contend that men's studies is unnecessary, as related disciplines such as sociology, history, psychology, political science and literature are already dominated by the theories and texts of men.

III. A Gender Reading of *Strange Interlude*

Female Victor and Male Victims

Female, the winning parties are seen to be dominating the male ideology in the play *Strange Interlude* where as in the retrospect males seem to be exploited. The dissertation especially applying the perspectives of gender studies views the text in which males are defeated by females in many and almost all issues. The play *Strange Interlude* picks away mercilessly at the scabs of intertwined lives. Beginning in 1918, the play produces to Nina, devastated in the last hours of World War I of her fiancé Gordon. Blaming her father for not allowing her to marry before Gordon away, she

leaves home to become a nurse without father's permission and advice, in the process trying to find comfort in sexual promiscuity.

NINA: *Strange Interlude!* Yes, our lives are merely strange light interludes in the electrical display of God the mother. I feel as if I were a girl and again and Sam you were a business husband and the Marsden my sexual husbands. I wonder is our old garden the same? Where Sam, Marsden, Gordon all are there. I'll pick flowers together in the aging afternoons of spring and summer. (3)

Nina feels that life is very happy if she guides all male characters. She compares to pick each and after using again wants to throw and picks new one. Life is too much light if she gets new taste of all male's. She leaves to focus on three men: Charles, the old family friend forever waiting prissily for her in the wings. Sam, the outgoing businessman she marries; Edmund the tortured doctor to whom she behaves secretly father to get money. This cursory observation might consign the play to condemnation as a sheer misogynist text, so it would be necessary here to mention that the play is not complicit with this negative representation of man. Rather it holds such generalizing and unfounded bias against the male kinds up to ridicule and serenity. The female character Nina is obsessive, neurotic woman who controls the heart of three men, while pinning away for her dead fiancé Gordon killed in the great war again she continues to control other male characters time to time. After the death of her fiancé, she feels nothing than amusing. It is worth noticing here that the female participant in this project remains totally noticed in the family. It is very much like a rape case in which despite the enormity of the crime, the female doesn't suffer from dishonor even if she is arrested and penalized; it is the male who has to live through

the sense or under the control of female. Feminist social conditioning of consciousness is led to this sorry state of affairs that irrespective of the fact that two parties are required to perform the act of strange, the whole burden is passed on to the male kinds only.

In this regard it is important to see how much their confined upbringing and lack of touch with the outside world, resulting in their spiritual and intellectual development, has made all male characters hesitate and insensitive. When Nina is about to give up her fiancé Gordon, she immediately selects Sam in the place of Gordon because of his money. She is not troubled but she is amused much. She says;

NINA: Easter vacate. . . Fatty Boggs and Jack Frazer. that
ouse of cheap vice . . . you own dollar Sam Why didn't
I love with Gordon not Sam? She has Lumpy body,
short legs and thick ankles; kid. . . He was only a kid!
Nothing has so sweet in life as loves Young dream,
what? Too silly. . . No importance Really my Sam. . . .
No boy I got before my age. (9)

A normal female being can't talk so insensitively about getting money and choosing new husband because their husband is dying. It is the fault of female, not the males; it is the result of their upbringing feminism by their other female in a feminist social structure where male are not supposed to be intellectual or wise. The female character Nina is too much happy that or fiancé is dead in world war. The sensitivity deadening structures and social structures, supported by the twisted exegetics of the scriptures, have rendered the male kind less than human being. Nina thinks she becomes free because her patronizing and restrictive father is dead but this is not true. The

domination as she thinks is only her ideological dream domination that is made by herself not as other male characters. Sam and Gordon always want her to marry but she is not ready to accept their plan and secretly meets all male and takes sexual intercourse. By taking sexual intercourse she shows her love time to time to all. Her insensitivity can be seen in the quest list they have prepared; she discriminates against the native dignitaries and invites the foreign ones. This hating behavior to all people also shows Nina is totally victor. She feels and does so; male characters are always think positive to her, whereas she always stands as a negative.

NINA: Oh my darling! Only by hints- looks. My heart Pounding. . . Seeing Nina again...How Sentimental...how she'd laugh if she knew! And quite rightly. . . I loved. . . that way. . . Her dear old Marsden. Ha. . . she's Seemed all day. . . thank God...what a life for me!. . . With the opening of the New term only a of few weeks off. (15)

Man may be rooted in social class, his class is a matter of birth and breeding of what one is; not of what one achieves. Males are falling into vulgar and demeaning posturing and falling to give the enemy by women. The concept of beauty, which praises the quality of women, balance, proportion and moderation and it is forbidding abstract to be removed from real life. Men's beauty is never judged by the female but female's beauty is judged always by males. It offers a kind of standard that ordinary bourgeois citizens might try to emulate, implying that the male body could be purified or purged of its imperfections. Of course, a long tradition of thought which claims that an individual moral well being depended upon her physical fitness. The capacity to beget children is accounted a must for a man also just like women. If she is to be accepted as a member into the family she joins in consequence to his marriage, she is sure to arouse suspicion in the family as to her fitness for providing lineage to the

family. Nina falls in love with Darrel and they have an affair that continues for many years, although it brings them unhappiness because she again falls in love with Sam of his wealth and business, later the situation is reversed. Ignoring the unconditional love of Charles Marsden Nina embarks on a series of sordid affairs before determining to marry an amiable person Sam, while Nina is pregnant with Sam's child, she learns a horrifying secret. The family has had a tendency towards insanity, Nina has an abortion. Then she will abort Sam's child and conceive a child with the physical Ned Darrell, letting Sam believes that it is his. The plans backfire when Nina and Ned's intimacy leads to their falling passionately in love.

In society male body is a part of a language of refusal of resistance to the sanitized ideologies of the state. The body increasingly takes on having been distinguished or dismembered. Even if he dies in world's goals, he won't get respect by the women. She easily chooses another man in place of him if she is beautiful. Her beauty poses again another man's life.

NINA: go . . . go to him!. . . find him . . . My lover Sam!Ned doesn't love me! He's gone...gone forever! ... no! ... a liar! Oh, I hate him...oh mother God, Please let me hate him! (thinking frenziedly) I won't bear it... he thinks he has palmed me off On Sam forever... and his child... he can't...It will make Sam kill him...i will promise to love Sam If he kills him. (41)

The thoughts that people think are never the same as they speak and in the play we can hear the thoughts. Nina was the flyer when she went Europe. She gave first pangs of love to Gordon, he would have married him before he had died, but she forbade the marriage. Charlie is a friend, Nina loves him but she doesn't marry with him, through

him she got chance to work in Europe. Sam is her husband and her love disappears after the ceremony when she finds out that there is mental illness in his family and that there can be no children. To have the child she wants but cannot have with Sam, she has a secret affair with Ned, who wants her. Nina continues to play with the emotions to all three men and devote herself none of them. Sam has failed to reciprocate the kindness extended to him by Nina, when he marries her. She feels success of this marriage but not the family bond. She is not thinking that he is her own husband but a kind of playing instrument. Marsden enters, looks around and speaks his thoughts, recalling his first visit, the early death of his father, how difficult it is for him in Europe in the absence of Nina but Nina feels very happy, when he thinks he is alone of his friendship with Nina. He jokes to himself about love of sex life and angrily recalls a difficult and that includes sexual intercourse with a woman while he was at school. Then he says, "I don't spend the time in Europe and I won't go in my future life and I won't write a few line there" (50).

Nina's comments about God, which seems to suggest that at least to her relatively short interludes like her promiscuous phase and larger interludes like her are not just passing moments in the history of the universe but are a completely irrelevant. Without putting it in so many words, Nina's speeches like the universe to God or to the male ideal of God, derive an important paradoxes at the heart of the male character's action. Events in human life are desperately important to those living then to God and to the rest of the universe but her filtration to every male character seem as the interlude lives in the play as strange. There are also the first several references that refer to different aspects of God male in her thinking, uninterested and violent and female interested life giving and nurturing. Nina's promiscuity is interesting from another perspective as well. At the time the play was return, woman's sexuality was a

mostly taboo subject, with the idea that women has feeling of sexuality other than those required by their husbands and biological drive to reproduce being relatively unheard . A promiscuous woman like Nina has been seen as scandalous. It means the general idea that marrying her to Evan is a good thing not only coming from a place of wanting Nina to heal but also from a place wanting to avoid her being branded an outcast. At the same time, Nina's ideas of a female God are interesting in terms of reimagining the ways. That universe might relate to individual human lives and establishing an outgoing thematic tension that develops through the play.

NINA: What memories as such a smiling Afternoon! This pleasant old town
after three months...I Want Go to Europe again...Write a line there
...how answer ...the fierce question of all those dead and named?...too
big a job for me! Mother seemed jealous of my concern...many have a
a never fallen in true love.... With Nina...could I...Used to dance her
on my knee...sit her on my lap...Like a dream and drug ...and my sex
life among the phantoms. (53)

Nina's obsession with Gordon to Sam is more intense at same points in the play and not in other, but derives her choices and fuels her emotions one way of another until the story ends. Her affection, jealousy and resentment foreshadows the similar reactions of the other men who come into her life and who all encounter difficulties in their relationships with her because of her obsession. Her comments about Gordon after his death having no big issues to hers. It foreshadows and defines her constant search for someone to replace one another then and compares. Second it foreshadows the birth of her son a few acts hence, the fact that she names the same Gordon and

takes sexual intercourse to her child. All male character's prudery and his feelings of tenderness toward Nina, all of which later affects their actions and relationships.

NINA: He thinks he means that ... pure love... it's easy to talk ...he does not know life... but he might be good for Nina ... if she were married to this simpleton, would she be faithful? and than I?... what a vile thought!.... I don't mean that! Giving Me the fishy, diagnosing eye they practice at medical school... Like Freshness from jowly cultivating broad A's at Harvard... What is his Specialty...pain, and easy care....all Sex the philosopher's stone Oedipus, o my king! The world is adopting you. (65)

Nina's character creates a fascinating dynamic, with the impression of being developed here and throughout the play of a woman who is emotionally stable, morally, intellectually and spiritually ahead of her time than men. It is also interesting to note that the treatment of the three male characters by Nina is dangerous of obsession. She is undeniably vulnerable, her emotional fragility awakening the need each other men at one time or another, to protect and help her. After some time she runs out, leaving Marsden to wonder in his thoughts whether she is truly happy, commenting on how in the early days of her marriage, she seems to be playing the part of a happy wife and now she is suddenly changed. Evan's thoughts reveal how excited he would be about being father and how he thinks it would mean that Nina really loved him but actually not. she refuses to believe and says he has no ideas, she angrily talks about her belief that if Evan gave her child son, she would leave to love him, adding she hates her baby because it is not hers anymore, it is his and therefore it is sick. This is how her conspiracy that controls male figure is seen here.

The love making incident has just provided the needed pretext for his capital punishment. The executioner here is no other than she herself. Nothing is more important for a female, be it mother or wife, when what is at stake is her honor. Even death of her lover is acceptable to her in an attempt to absolve him of the dishonor brought by her acts. Thus the crime, the violence of human life is precipitated by the need to purge oneself of the blemish brought by the male members of one's family. The narrator comments fittingly shamelessness, uninterestedness, the roots of violence.

NINA: No! maybe I almost have Lately But only when I thought of his baby! Now I hate him! Don't touch me. I hate you too. I don't love to your child. I only married because you needed me. And I needed children, I have got to kill my children, you need not argue anymore! I hate it too now because it sick. It's not my baby, it is yours.(95)

Nina is pregnant but she has not told Evan, her husband. Marsden guesses her secret but says nothing. He is jealous, since he also loves Nina. She herself explains the long history of insanity in the family and gets an abortion. Evans is trying unsuccessfully to write advertising copy. He is either genuinely or merely ashamed, can't help blushing on account of the shame. He has caused to his wife or he is inwardly getting fiery, is burning with rage against the repressive social system that dehumanizes a male individual and even does not hesitate in writing of his name from the book of life. Same wife who wants to sex but not ready to give the birth of the child in the name of insanity is victimization of woman in the text. It is possible as the textual evidences to support that he is really irate with the feminist system that diverted, its men of their fundamental human right to life. His blushing is a sort of angry gesture;

“Blushing is a slow burning”(90) deprived of the love of his wife and treated with contempt by his mother is gathering strength engendered by dissatisfaction with one's life and the sense of being undermined on account of one's weakness or smallness. The smoldering sense of extreme hate and dissatisfaction gets to vent. Everybody is shocked as to how she could gather the strength and how she managed to escape from the eyes of all male guards. Even the poor male can't understand what lent him that much force and drive to act so violently, here we see how a weak, mentally retired, physically small sized boy turns into a murderous monster. Evan hopes for success in business which guides Nina and ultimately when she gets all money she tears him and follows another. We see clearly in Evan thoughts how simple, straightforward, and honest his love for Nina is and in Marsden's how relatively passionless and intellectual his love, his feelings can be inferred from his absence, which suggests that he cares for Nina so much that he can't stand to see her marriage to another man.

The text makes it clear that her visit to every male character is a surprise and she is attracted to each other. It also defines the moment in which she realizes all three male characters could possibly be the man who could help her realize her goals. She decides her thoughts suggest that the idea has been taking shape for so much time, perhaps since her abortion or even her visit to Evan's mother. Every male's appearance therefore triggers inspiration in her, which triggers her sudden relevance of desire which in turn triggers all male and which leads to the complications.

Another example of the potentially scandalous nature of Nina's character and activities defined by the revelation of her abortion. At the time the play was written, abortion was illegal, but the point to note here is that neither the male character completely abandons their feeling of love, desire and obsession are the quality that controls every male which is stranger than personal and social disaster and aspect of

their relationships. Nina, by using love, guides every male and becomes a victory in around the text though male seems too much innocence. She plays over innocence males.

NINA: Evan: she seems better tonight...Happier...she seems to love me...If she'll only get all well again, then Everything's will...hello, Ned I'm certainly glad to see you again..... after All three years! Strong hands like me, smiling face like me,... haven't I ? whose character you could shape and woman life You could guide? It's too late, I've just left and rejoined another! I am Nina. I shall be happy..... I shall make my husband happy. (135)

Nina's thoughts reveal her superstitious fear of having blackness and mourning in a place where there is so much happiness. She tells herself to stop being silly. Her thoughts become incoherent, she tells herself to give some trouble to the male ideology. She accuses all doctors being liars and hypocrites; she speaks angrily to all male characters. Ultimately she falls in love with doctor by his profession. They gather and talk than immediately changes the subject and says 'I want to divorce' so she and doctor can marry. So how she's lost all the important things in her life because she didn't have the idea to accept the happiness but only have the power of sex to control all males. Though we see she is totally failure woman for herself but she is thinking "I'm beautiful girl, I'm only twenty years old, and I have so many persons to choose for my coming days (138) .This line suggests us that she is the weapon of victor made by O'Neil in his life perhaps by the time O'Neil wrote this play. It was the time where woman's movement got succeeds; they didn't feel what the previous women thought. Women are seemed as out of control. Permission of

male is not needed even the work is too bad also. Woman doesn't ask anything to their husbands but if husbands are ready to do anything they necessarily ask to their woman. In the text Nina herself is ready to divorce but none of the male characters spoke for the divorce. Nina's thoughts returns to how she feels her child moves, to her feeling of moving with the tide, to the idea of God as a mother, and there suddenly, to be anguished recollections of her afternoons happiness (Divorce). She is too much happy with divorce but Sam is not happy. Even being sad he says nothing.

But, to their utter surprise and shock, Nina aborts male child. He is small-sized baby the wrong miracle as the playwright astutely comments in relation to her unexpected or unwanted birth. This birth takes place at the army hospital and leaves the child there and she runs away. When Marsden talks of the female baby as so beautiful a daughter and wants to congratulate the father Sam. In the case of male child there is a sign of insanity and in the case of female child there in no sign of insanity; that means she not only dominates male husbands but also her children. She is not ready to accept that it was a daughter of her but she is ready to accept the mother of a beautiful daughter.

NINA: This man is my husband..... it's hard to accept and
Remember...that's shameful, Sam you must give me a
divorce....I'm sacrificed enough of my life.... What has He
given me?..... Poor Sam doesn't know about Nina. (165)

Thus, the explosion happens consequential to the repression of the sense of shame and anger. Even the poor male himself can't understand what lent him that much force and drive to act so violently. The practice of naming a kind caring female person as a male has a serious implication, that to be considerate, emotional and protective is the

task of a man not a female. The feminist mode of thinking has trained us into believing that child bearing is in dissociable, associated with child rearing. That is, a mother can't be a good care taker of her child if she does that she is treated as male or Manish nature is absolutely negative. The word man is apparently used negatively in such a context. But there is not proven standard to prove that bring womanish or womanly is positive but being Manish or mainly is absolutely negative. There is no any essential difference between the character of woman and man. We are reminded of Robert Connell when he definitely refuted any possibility of essence prior to existence. It is the way we work; we occupy that define us.

As Robert Connell puts it: "An existent is nothing other than what she does; the possible doesn't extend beyond the real, essence doesn't precede existent: In pure subjectivity, the human is not anything. She is to be measured by her acts" (133).

No doubt, the central tensions among Nina and her three lovers redefine themselves yet again. The key element here is the contrast between the way the male characters attempt to hold their feelings in check and the way Nina repeatedly gives her free rein to all. Darrell's struggle to control her is ultimately fails; his resistance is not related to his own sense of identity. He has defined himself as dispassionate and objective, his sense of self worth being completely tied up with that self image anything that challenges that self-image, such as her very non-object passion for Darrell is seen as potentially destructive and therefore might be denied being a victim. By the same token, Marsden has defined himself through mother, particularly her sense of propriety. Anything that seems improper, indecorous or indiscreet that is to say, anything like the passion and desire he feels for Nina. In his words disgusting and therefore must be denied to him. The key point to him that he's defined not by a

negative, as the other, two men are but by positive, his devotion and love to his wife and at the end his child.

Nina's thoughts reveal her jealousy and she teases him about financial things. She says herself "I'm a financial and commercial wife not a real wife" (312). Marsden says "love without sex is impossible; it's a wise father who knows his child" (314). Marsden knows the truth of the child but Nina doesn't know. She only knows how to guide male and their money. In her thoughts, she exults in the power she has over the men, how she guides their desires converging in her superstitious fear that "God mother" will hear and destroy her happiness though she doesn't know. She realizes the control she has over each of three and refers to them as her "My men" legally, she's married only to Evan but emotionally, the other men feel married to her as well, with each accepting the presence of the others. From Nina's perspective, this moment is the culmination of everything. She is striving to achieve since the beginning of the play. Several times she is referred to her desire for control and for accepting the happiness and she rejects Gordon without any cause. She is acknowledging herself as a sexually free and even powerful being.

NINA: What a change...the last time I was here the air was Poisoned.....

Darrell..... I was sure he was her lover.....But I was in morbid state..... Why did Darrell run away?....Nina could have got Sam to divorce her if she really loved Darrell..... than it's evident she couldn't have loved him.....She was going to have Sam's baby. Darrell's love must have Seemed like treachery.....so she sent him away.....that must Be it. There is no danger of ever making a love match, is there Charlie? Is it possible he loves me? What a sickening idea! It's Too absurd. (173)

Nina from the point of view of sex is very powerful. She feels, due to sex she finds her life full of change. She feels that once she has a particular husband the air was blowing so poisonously but now she has no particular husband that's why she gets fresh air. She gets taste of love to all of males. She scolds if anyone will run away. She always wants all men's are moving around her and if she needs she can use anytime.

In a society where women are supposed to take charge of all public and important affairs of life whereas men are not required to have much brain of intelligence. It would be a disadvantage for women to be intelligent, their intelligence would pose threat to their wife and the society. This is the line of thought Sam expresses when they are talking over the marriage of Nina. A man doesn't have to be a brain box. Brains are a positive disadvantage to a man in marriage, a man is advocating that the intellectually weaken a boy is the more his chances of a happy patriarchal life. The complicity of Nina with this female propagated ideology only proves the insidiousness and power of the stereotypes one is fed within a matriarch. Nina feels all the marriage ceremony is the business. In fact O'Neil here emphatically rejects reason; particularly reason is expressed through science, as a means of guiding or understanding life. Female characters (Nina and Darrell's mother) are at the mercy of irrational forces and the most object of Victor by using their irrational forces. Darrell and Sam is the victim by her force. She says, "Thinking doesn't matter dam". Science and philosophy doesn't work in the field of love (20). We criticize it after reading that science can't bring and touch the control of phenomena, the basic reality which is the will here he connects this science because she gives torture to male characters without the reason, only irrational forces. By using women O'Neill carries the idea that life is controlled by irrational forces to the conclusion that science is

inadequate to understand cope with life. The view of life as controlled by irrational forces which sweep individual into personally destructive love affairs. Marsden muses that Nina hasn't announced her pregnancy. Wives hide it from their husbands. Ancient shame, guilty of continuing life, Nina does so because she filters every male and male. Her ultimate will is to dominate every male in her whole life.

As Krutch puts it: "No satisfactory catastrophe, only a diminuendo, as the characters, which is neither solved their personal problems or mad defeat heroic, subside into the quiescence of age" (665). The next striking point is, when Darrell plans to return to the West Indies and Gordon's thought reveal how happy he is that Darrell is living. Nina wonders aloud how it is possible for Darrell to leave his work. He goes on to explain that he and Marsden have become poor after business. Nina insists he resembles his namesake and Darrell says that a bearing resemblance to the first Gordon is the last thing he'd want for a boy, then Nina warns him to behave himself or he will be punished and she tells him to leave room also.

NINA: Poor man!... isn't he silly?.. at his age, after all We've been through,
to still feel jealous... no, do Shut up! I can't stand hearing those same
old reproaches I've heard a thousand times before. (185)

Nina asks for Sam's forgiveness for hurting Darrell, he says she has given him the only happiness he has ever known. Nina speaks angrily to Darrell then they (males) agree that they should part at these moments. Nina's parallel obsessions to the two Gordon become more developed. The audience clearly sees how she is projecting her love, need and loneliness for the first into the second. Her obsession is her increasingly obvious confusion between the past and present. In terms of the three men and their love for Nina, Marsden is still wallowing in his unrequited passion; Darrell is still turn between Sam and Nina which he doesn't know. He simply devotes

to her because he is too much innocent. He doesn't know the affair between Nina and Sam. The parallels diverge later in the play when we discover that Darrell's new favorite accepts his attention when Nina rejects. As a result Darrell finds a kind of peace while Nina finds descendsintmental state is not necessarily madness but it comes close.

Another reference worth a critical gaze is the unanimous premonitory tone she (Nina) speaks when she sees males back to her father's home after months from her running away with Gordon. She hypnotized Sam and forcibly raped him. The total fault lays her not the male but the society (Generally) is wanted to blame the male only in the case of rape. It is a female who really has deflowered Sam and Evan.

SAM: "He is trying to insult me...I know all...he Means send me away and love with Nina....She means send me away and gets my home Suppose that it is her... I know all means but What do I do...She is sending me away! Intentionally before me! It means she's finished... she is trying to humiliate me before him. (197)

Really Nina's wish is sending all accept on to away and demands money to every male character. I no...not this time ... I promised... no quarrels...remember forever "(200). Darrell's thought also refers to Nina's jealousy his recollection that Nina expressly wants see him and his gratitude having some emotional distance from her. Nina complains about how enthusiastically Evan is cheering and he reminds her that she used to cheer just as loudly for the first Gordon saying young Gordon. Nina orders Darrell to enter cabin with her and starts to drink and says I'm involved with you. She starts to abuse Darrell. She leaves him there and goes to Evan and does the same as she does Darrell. This is how we criticize that she every time and everywhere

seem as the vital Victor character. She uses all male characters either in rooms, in educational areas and the public places like a ground. All male characters don't know the truth of her behavior. They all think that she loves with them, but in reality she loves none of them. They are just her weapons of sexuality.

The race has started and that Gordon is in third place. After she exists, Nina talks about what a bad engagement is. Darrell disagrees but she wants him that Gordon is his son and asks him to talk to him. As she touches him pleadingly, Darrell's thoughts reveals that he can still be aroused or guided by her and this reinforces his determination not to do anything about it. Nina's manner becomes stranger and she seems lose track of the conversation, they are talking about Evan. This leads Nina to refer to God mother and her determination not loose Gordon or other. She resolves to get Darrell to help her, believing that she has to convince him that she told him about the insanity in Evan's family was a lie. This leads Nina to say she is still loves him and too hearer with him. She also says they have to punish Evan for keeping them apart, saying Darrell was her own source of happiness. But in reality she doesn't love to him. In the same token she also visits Evan and says what she says to Darrell that is how she is totally liar and that liar makes her she is totally a Victor of all males. Nina's victory represents her own victory over all male characters determination to keep all for herself and destroy their engagement, her victory symbolizes her victory all males heart and love. It also becomes clear that Mother God's love, in spite of Nina's previously that it is nurturing and selfless can be just as destructive. Nina's prayer for Mother God to bring all male heart back. The point here is that if love is allowed by simply love, rather than evolving into obsession and a desire for control, life comes simpler. The defining example here is Evan, whose love for both Nina and all male characters have always been just that love only.

SAM: Darrell and how? ... what? I can look into her eyes...strange eyes that will never grows old...without desires a jealousy or bitterness...was she ever my mistress?...can she be the mother of my child?....is there such a person as my son?.... I can't think of these things as real anymore. (205)

Sam mourns in front of Nina though she doesn't have no attention. Still he wants her even if she made other male husbands or has a sex to her. He says he again cares her. His dream is not going to change. His eyes never will grow old unless and until he does not get her. He says it is bitter. He feels and says she is ever my mistress; she is ready to accept her child and lives with me or not (21). I never thought badly to her and I won't feel soon also. This is how everywhere males are surrendering their life to woman but female filters all males by looking physical fitness and their money. If she gets money she is ready to accept to all male being a wife. After getting money she leaves the same male who provides love and money to her. Every time she is running after the new figure of male. She has no intention of her own family.

The next obvious feminist drive of the play lies in its conferring the active role into its female character. As a rule patriarchal societies confine women within some or other sorts of walls be that church, kitchen, children or veil. This confinement has a debilitating effect upon the male characters of literary works since what literature does is once again to reflect the reality of the lived world but the same confinement might be generating a possibly fatal strength within the suppressed gender. Repression of sort is threatening to the very safety of the repressor. The pent-up emotions, violent therefore uncontrollable ones, are likely to burst upon blowing up with them, the torturer and the tortured. Here this warning about the looming threat can't be lightly ignored. This is the premonitory and pleading aspect of the play. The united effort of

the women can toppled down the man-made rules and traditions in all their artificiality and injustice. The three male characters agree to blatantly violate the feminist norms and senses of propriety by having a child in such a way that nobody can pinpoint which of the three males are the actual father of the baby born out of Nina. The reference about the close relationship among the three fathers of a child. A minority of male scholars also figure the loss of male privilege as a form of male oppression, pointing to woman's superiority in reproductive freedom and choice, as well as archaic attitudes toward child custody and domestic violence laws that criminalize men without a jury trial. Despite this, the majority still identify as female and contend that males are unnecessary. A discriminating eye of female always roots in male's life in the play *Strange Interlude*. Maleness, potentially progressive is also innately diseased; the very spring of male identity is also potentially the source of its destruction as dissolution repels by the male body.

Nina within the Discourse of Feminism

The play '*Strange Interlude*' deserves special attention not merely for its dramatic elements but for its politically engaging commentaries on the oppressive systems in countries like America. The first important fact for a feminist reader concerning O'Neill's play is that female characters occupy the central concern. The central concern of the play is Nina, a mentally and physically victor. She is tall and athletic with straw-blond hair. As a young woman, she falls in love with four men at the same time, a college student to the professional high level's doctor. Her motto is only placing every male under her circle. Devastated by Nina and angry mood of her, every male seems innocence and failure. She feels to love every male is her victory over them. All males have an affair that continues for many years, it brings them no happiness. At any point she wants to divorce to all male but they will not agree

because they love her more heartily not physically. They don't know the real affair between Nina and others. Nina finds some degrees of happiness as she controls every male. She is completely content with any of her relationships with men whether the man is father, husband lover or son.

NINA: I suppose every single damned inmate has fallen love with me.

The dollar house...they were like patent leather buttons in a Saucer of blue ink! ...His book ...his chair...his bedroom... his lap...dreaming into the dark beyond windows ...warm in his arms before the fireplace...dreams like sparks Soaring up to die in the cold dark. (19)

The verbal play asides, the Playwright states definitely what he writes about in the play. To make an idiot, a moron the protagonist, if one may use the term for boy is to take an extremely daring and out of the way step. A play normally, at least in line with the exception of the convention, should be about some really worthy characters, not about a handicapped boy who is termed a failure to his family. But the play violets this expectation and takes to recounting the story of men. It is itself a masculinity gesture on the part of the play and playwright. Nina, though she is pregnant, but she has not told Evan, her husband. Marsden guesses her secret but says nothing for him. She herself explains the long history of Insanity of Sam. Then she aborts the child. Evans is doing poorly in his career and believes she does not love him. He decides to grant her a divorce for her sake but he lacks the courage to tell her. She despises him and treats him badly in front of Darrell, with whom she has fallen in love.

NINA: You are my lover! Nothing else matters. Yes I remember what you said, "being happy is the nearest we can come to know what good is"

And I'm going to be happy! I've lost everything in life so far because I didn't have the courage to take it... And I've hurt everyone around me. There's no use trying to think of other's. One human being can't think of another. It's impossible (gently and caressingly) but this time I'm going to think of my own happiness And that means you ... and our child. (10)

O'Neill has ample commentaries to make in this connection. First, his female characters come forward to a deserved in the play so long denied to them. This reminds one of the shift modern literatures took in replacing the practice of recounting the story and history of the so-called nobility comprising the royalty, knight, the supernatural female power by the story of the common, down trodden people. The only problem is that even with this shift, half of the human race, the male race is left unaccounted. In the play *Strange Interlude* among six characters fours are males are two are females. These two females get full value but the male do not. Only two female characters dominate four male characters. That is how the stories and histories of the male are neither seriously told nor heard with interest. Sam has no any interest but Nina has full interest. She does what she wants but Sam doesn't do what he wants. So much so that, even the few successful male writers of twentieth century have to assume pseudonyms for the fear that they might lose the respect and trust of their readers if the readers know the writers are female. But O'Neill's play gives more boldly gives more space to the male characters then it does top the male one. All the male characters are helpless in the grip of female ideology. Their plight cosmic comments when Nina seems to become larger than life and sees herself as an embodiment of the universal mother god who absorbs the many into the one. This moment comes at the end of act 6, when Darrell Marsden and Evan are all

contemplating her with different degrees and kinds of desire. She is acutely aware of all their desire and her desire dominates and absorbs them in a kind of maternal cosmic womb.

NINA: My three men! I feel their desires converge in me! To form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb and whole they dissolve in me, their life is my life I am pregnant with the three! Husband! Father! Lover! And the fourth man! Little man! Little Gordon! He is mine too! That makes it perfect.(25)

Next, the equality of male and female is established, at least in their share plight under unfavorable female systems, they both live under the same social and female systems, both are victim of dictators, though from time to time men are exposed to more than their fair share of humiliation and brutality in such repressive regimes. The next obvious feminist drives of the play lies in its conferring the active role onto its female characters. As a rule, patriarchal societies confine women within same or other sorts of walls are that church, kitchen or veil. This confinement has a debilitating effect upon the female characters of literary works since what literature does is once again to reflect the reality of the lived world. But the same confinement might be generating a possibly fatal strength within the suppressed gender. Repression of any sort is threatening to the very safety of the repressor. The pent-up emotion and violent therefore uncontrollable once, is likely to burst open blowing up with them the torturer Nina and tortured Sam. Now what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she is a free and autonomous creature. Nevertheless finds herself lives in a family. Never feeling the duty of mother and wife, Nina always seems smart woman who regularly controls three men but never lives under the male, she says:

NINA: What does he always want of me...? I am the only one who senses his deep hurt.... I feel how life has Wounded him... is that partly my fault, too...I have wounded everyone... poor Charlie, Sam...I mean all my three men...the idea used to be revolting... now nothing about love seems important enough to be revolting, poor Charlie, he only thinks he ought to desire me !...I hate all three of them. (55)

Thus, the dual representation of woman has kept all males at a disadvantages position. Being mother, wife and mistress she represents her identity as a superior. Therefore, it takes no extra perception to see that the contradictory and conflicting stereotypes of men are female projections and as such they ought to be understood as the outward expressions of female attitude over male ideology. Women must examine the way in which society's institutions are organized. The lines of power an authority they established and the ways in which goods and services are produced and distributed. Attempting to change gender relations through co-parenting will not suffice to overcome male dominance.

IV. Conclusion

The male characters are made puppet in the hand of female flirt as Nina frees herself from the family bond by leaving her child under the care of three men. Nina develops a habit of tearing all males one by one and compels to bring in dilemma between life and death. So, she is a stronger girl whose life is full of interlude. Thus female in this way are made a victorious party by presenting themselves in a strange liberated and unfathomable status. In the play, males are sexually infatuated by female incantation and they indulge in sex surrendering to the female superiority.

The society of nineteenth century women had got complete shell of feminism, female was receiving remarkable progress on socio- economic and political aspects. In that capitalist society due to the new innovation of technology, commerce and business, women got higher rank. They understood the meaning of love and sex. They were too much conscious on their body and beauty. They knew the value of beauty. They used love and sex as a tool to manipulate males. In this transitional phase women were making their effort to sough equality with males to secure a piece of pie and essentially sough opportunities for women's advancement in the existent through institutional reforms and workplace. As such males were encouraging for socio-economic, educational upliftment for the females feeling that their empowerment would help to run family smoothly, on the other side they introspected that such changes would ruin their freedom and divert their authority.

Thus, ultimately females attitude toward men are negative. Males have been victimized by female sexuality. Females have established certain restrictions and dictated certain rules over sex, as a result females are started leading and imposing their authority over males. Nina resists even the loving and devoting male's norms and

values of the society. She determines to break the male tradition. She tries to get emancipation through the path of compromise and self-understanding cooperation and dialogic relation with all males. She doesn't believe living in the same home, children and husband is the complete solution. Nina is a strong willed woman, destroys many men who intersect her. She always runs over the very innocence male characters. She represents power, which has been boasting of the tradition of begetting males in a plenteous way. Nina's life, therefore, brings dishonor upon her family. By using such powerful female character, O'Neill tries to show how males are exploited by the female in the pretext of sex and love. In conventional literature, women are represented as weak and suppressed, always keeping on the norms of decorum and modesty or conversely as wicked while men are active, good and heroic. But O'Neill through the play has given the clear idea that in the family of contemporary society, females dominate over men and their life. The play tends to undermine male worth and existence by portraying males as inactive and weak. Male characters are challenged by the representation of the beastly and violent aspect of Nina. She challenges every male's power such as her lover, her husband, her father and son equally. In Sam's and Darrell's moronic, immature, innocence and small sized existence which Nina finds liberal and starts to control and guide here and there in every moment to get money and to feel superiority. The life of Nina is very happy because she has only to round and control all men where as the life of Sam is very hard and unhappy because he is tortured by females. The images of men in all feminist are fraught with sharp contradictions. Men are extolled by female virtues of modesty, submission and tenderness.

Thus, women are represented as having dual representation of being all that is desirable, fascinating and wonderful, yet destructive and dangerous also. This dual

representation of women has kept all males at a disadvantages position. The females know how easy to control men. The sex and love is the sharp weapon or central element of controlling the male ideology in the play *Strange Interlude*.

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