

**DEATH WISH IN EUGENE O ' NEILL :
A CRITICAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO HIS ONE-ACT PLAYS**

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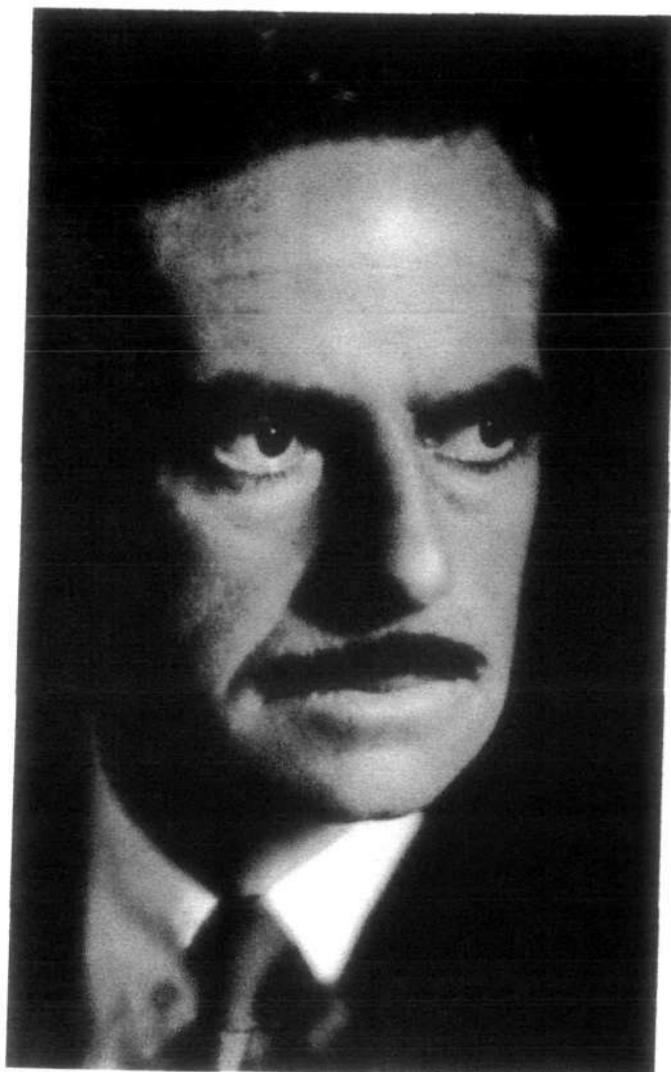
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(b 1888 - d 1953)

. . . to face my dead at last

Eugene O'Neill to Carlotta

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PREFACE

WHY O'NEILL

*For a second you see — and seeing the secret, are the secret.
... Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone*

Edmund Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night

Preface

I knew Eugene Gladstone O'Neill when I was doing my post graduate studies in English and opted for American literature as my special paper.

O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra (1931), which we had to study, fascinated me so much that I decided to read more plays of O'Neill after my postgraduation. My personal liking for O'Neill further deepened when I started reading his works afterwards. Since O'Neill's career as a dramatist began from his one - act plays like A Wife for a Life (written in 1913) and Bound East for Cardiff (1914), I considered it worthwhile to read the one - acters before reading his full - fledged dramas. O'Neill himself believed that his one-acters contained the germ of the spirit and life-attitude of his important future works.

O'Neill's plays fall into chronological groupings through which the changes and development of his art may be traced. According to their dates of composition three groups emerge : those plays written from 1913 to 1925, 1926 - 1933 and 1939 - 1943. To the first group, it is needless to mention, belong his early one - act plays. Hence, my decision to read the one - acters. In course of my reading those plays, which specially drew my attention was O'Neill's obsession with death. In O'Neill death was a kind of grand gesture, a ritual celebration of freedom, escape or home coming.

It is rather interesting that "out of thirty-seven of O'Neill's plays it has been observed that there are only five free from murder, death, suicide or insanity. In the others the score is eight suicides and one unsuccessful attempt, twelve important murders (not counting incidental episodes); twenty six deaths, nearly all due to violence, and eight cases of insanity."¹ This was O'Neill.

O'Neill was "... in love with death²." The vision of death which loomed large in O'Neill, gave me a new insight into his works. And I began to think whether I could embark upon my Ph.D dissertation on the theme of death wish with reference to his one-acters. The critical literature about O'Neill though prolific, had not paid adequate attention to this subject which hovered over the creative world of Eugene Gladstone O'Neill.

I discussed my idea with my supervisor Dr. B.K. Banerjee. Encouragement received from him went a long way in shaping this present dissertation. I owe a lot to him.

Psychiatrist Hervert Hendin in The Age of Sensation used the expression, "drawn to death as a way of life". Another psychiatrist, Mary Gibbin observes that the only love affair in a suicidal child's life may be his love affair with death. Poets Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, both of whom killed themselves, appeared to have a romance with death. Sexton, who committed suicide in 1974 wrote "Wanting to Die". (a poem posthumously published in 1976) in which she described her desire to die as "the almost unnameable lust".

O'Neill's deeply rooted scepticism expressed throughout his writings, may be viewed as a manifestation of his death wish. To him America was not the most successful country in the world, but "the greatest failure". His second wife Agnes Boulton wrote, he was "firmly convinced that he could not alter that heavy hand of fate"³. Belonging and peace are invariably the attributes of death in O'Neill's plays; life is characterised by alienation and pain. Death was always "the right of release" (Robert Mayo-a self portrait in **Beyond the Horizon**). There was medical testimony to this. Dr. G.V. Hamilton treated O'Neill in 1926 and noted the death wish. Also the doctor who attended his death bed in 1953 confirmed it.

Still there was something deeper in this death wish that truly haunted me. Somewhere in the work this American Playwright made me feel disturbed and moved. It was akinness of O'Neill to Oriental thought.

The mystic vision of Eugene O'Neill about death almost echoed the concept of Nirvana as the final attainment of life. Eugene himself was aware of this as evident in the theme of **Lazarus Laughed** and exclamation of Edmund Tyron in **Long Day's Journey Into Night**. Frederick I Carpenter in his "Eugene O'Neill the Orient and American Transcendentalism"⁴ first put a voice to it which was carried on further by Robinson James A. in **Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought: A Divided vision**.⁵ The ultimate achievement of O'Neill was not limited to American life or "American reality". As F.I.Carpenter puts it in **The Pattern of O'Neill's Tragedies**. ". . . O'Neill no longer celebrated the romantic dreams of his characters, nor condemned

their selfish materialism, nor even participated emotionally in their human tragedies. Rather, he transcended both the actions and the passions which he described, so that his characters seemed to live out their tragedies without help or hindrance of author. The final dramas ceased to be romantic and became 'transcendental'"⁶. O'Neill neither sympathized with nor criticized his characters for their 'pipedreams' but dealt them with a distant objectivity something like "beyond good and evil". It is difficult to resist the temptation of quoting F. I. Carpenter again, "The 'trancendental' tragedy of the later O'Neill achieves a goal much like that of the oriental religion and philosophy which lured O'Neill throughout his life, and which found final expression in **Tao House**. In the final tragedies, the veil of Maya seems to be torn aside and all the illusions of human life laid bare. . . . when the veil of Maya is torn aside, he may achieve an approximation of Nirvana. This modern philosophy of tragedy which sees man's life as necessarily doomed to defeat may constitute a kind of victory, arrives at much the same goal as the most important religions of the Orient. . . ."⁷

This gave me a new insight. Reading O'Neill turned out to be a bimodal journey for me. I became convinced about the role of death drive in O'Neill's creations. I also realized that the drive may have many expressions. The concept of Nirvana, that is escaping from cycles of life altogether is also a death wish – the ultimate call of the inorganic.

Hence, the choice of my subject. The whole project has been presented in five chapters. **The first chapter** is a survey of O'Neill criticism. This

would justify the relevance of this dissertation. In **The Second Chapter** I have studied the man, his family and his upbringing to search the roots of this death wish. My **Third Chapter** is an overall study of the major works of O'Neill vis - a - vis his one - acters. The **Fourth Chapter** examines exclusively the one - acters of O'Neill highlighting the death wish in the respective plays. In the concluding chapter, I have attempted a summing up of my observation about the whole thesis.

And in the Appendix, we have provided O'Neill's own diagram showing "the early forces that had shaped him." and a graph of **Long days journey into night** from **The Defense of Psychoanalysis in literature : Long days journey into night and A view from the bridge** by Albert Rothenberg and Eugene D. Shapiro, and a photocopy of Agnes Boulton's observations on **Part of a Long Story**.

Since no thesis is complete without a bibliography, I have prepared the same following the instructions as laid down in the M.L.A. Handbook. I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge my special debts to Professor Amitabha Roy, Shakespeare Professor of English, Rabindra Bharati University of Calcutta, Professor Sisir Das, Retd. Professor of English, University of Calcutt and Professor Viswanath Chatterjee, former Professor of English Jadavpur University. I sought their valued advice while writing this dissertation. But for their co-operation this thesis would never see the light of day.

I express my sincerest gratitude to Smt. Gouri Sen of the Ph.D. Section.

University of North Bengal. She was all helpful in my humble exercise of writing this thesis. The staff of the North Bengal University Library helped me immensely by providing me with important books and journals. I owe a lot to each member of the library.

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CHAPTER I

FATHOMING O'NEILL

A SURVEY OF O'NEILL CRITICISM

*Whatever is unclear about Eugene O'Neill, one thing is certainly
clear — his genius.*

Lionel Trilling.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (b 1888 - d 1953), America's greatest dramatist "is an excellent example of reputation's roller - coaster ride". Hence, a prolific critical literature of diverse interests about him and his creative works have evoked an eloquent response from the critics worldwide. He is rated among the classic playwrights of the world. This present survey will provide some interesting glimpses about O'Neill the man, O'Neill the playwright and O'Neill the father of modern American theatre.

Few artists have been as overwhelmingly and relentlessly autobiographical as was Eugene O'Neill. And without a proper knowledge of the man, O'Neill's works could not be properly understood. Accordingly, a biographical literature was produced after him. A good many biographies have been written to present the man before the readers. In this connection we would refer to Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb's very important biography O'Neill (New York : Harper, 1962). This work records every detail of O'Neill's life; his relationship with the parents and brother, his seafaring, his remarkable final years with his last wife, Carlotta Monterey O'Neill. The Gelbs' massive biography very subtly captures the dramatist and the stress and strain of O'Neill's life. Another very interesting and informative biography has been presented by Louis Sheaffer. The first part entitled O'Neill : Son and playwright (J. M. Dent & Son Ltd. London, 1968) covered the dramatist's life upto 1920 when Beyond the Horizon, O'Neill's first full length play in three acts opened on Broadway. The second volume (1973) probes further O'Neill's meteoric rise to celebrity, his dramatic excellence till the period of

the decline of his reputation. Ironically this very later period in O'Neill's life is now seen as the time of composition of his greatest two plays - The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey Into Night.

There are other studies of his life. For his being too much an autobiographical writer, O'Neill's life has generated much interests among the biographers. In the 1920s, Barrett. H. Clark published Eugene O'Neill (New York : McBride, 1926). This was revised and reissued in 1929 with a slight change in the original title, Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays. This work is hailed as a pioneering biographical work on the playwright. As such, its importance cannot be oversimplified. In this connection reference should be made to an interesting memoir - Part of A Long Story, 1958 by Agnes Boulton, O'Neill's second wife. This work records O'Neill's tales of attempted suicide, his alcoholism, his struggle in Greenwich Village and Provincetown. In 1959, was published a very remarkable biography of O'Neill, The Curse of the Misbegotten (New York : McGraw - Hill, 1959) by Bowen Crosswell with the cooperation of O'Neill's son Shane. In each successive year, an interesting biography is seen coming up. Doris Alexander in the 60s, writes The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill (New York : Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962). The canvas of this biography is not vast. However, the biographer focusses on some important periods of O'Neill's life to show how such periods have gone a longway in formulating a distinct form which O'Neill followed in his later best plays. In the 70s was published Frederick I. carpenter's Engene O'Neill (New York : Twayne, rev. ed. Boston : Twayne,

1979). This book is both a biography vis-a-vis a brief study of O'Neill's plays.

All the biographies written so far have observed that O'Neill is eminently an autobiographical dramatist.

Apart from biographical works, O'Neill criticism is vast and varied. From the 1920S his achievement as a playwright was established and many prizes and awards were bestowed on him for a good many of his dramatic works.

In 1928 was published a significant work on O'Neill. It was Joseph T. Shipley's The Art of Eugene O'Neill (Seattle : Univ. of Washington Book store, 1928). It was the first critical work devoted exclusively to O'Neill studies. Six plays of Eugene O'Neill published in 1928 by Alan D. Mickle, has placed O'Neill in the company of the world's greatest playwrights.

In 1934 Sophus Keith winther published a brilliant criticism on O'Neill, entitled, Eugene O'Neill : A critical Study (New York : Random House, 1934). This book has made a highly favourable estimation of O'Neill. What is more, the book has explored the world of O'Neill's thought which his plays so distinctly manifest.

In the 1930S, there was another significant work, Richard Dana Skinner's Eugene O'Neill : A Poet's quest (New York : Longman's Green,

1935). This book has looked for an inner continuity in the plays. Accordingly, the author has studied the plays chronologically from Bound East for Cardiff to Days Without End.

In the 1940S O'Neill temporarily receded in oblivion. The United States went to war. And the playwright was silently languishing in distress. We do not remember any such critical work which was written about the playwright during this period. Again in the 1950S, with the New York premier of The Iceman Cometh in 1946, revivals of Anna Christie and Desire Under the Elms in 1952, O'Neill's death in 1953, O'Neill criticism was seen coming up afresh. The first extensive scholarly analysis appeared in 1953 by Edwin A. Engle, The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill (Cambridge, Mass; Harvard Univ. Press 1953). The importance of the book lies in the fact that it does a close literary analysis of the plays in relation to the themes and merit of the plays themselves. There is another significant publication in the year 1958, Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension : An Interpretive Study of the Plays (New Burnswick : Rutgers Univ. Press, 1958) by Doris V. Falk. This book examines the plays in order of performance. It is psychological in approach and examines the mind of the man behind the plays.

1960S being the prolific years in O'Neill criticism, have seen a number of works which have widened the horizon of O'Neill studies. A useful comprehensive anthology, O'Neill and his plays : Four Decades of criticism having criticisms, reviews, memoirs, and an extensive bibliography,

edited by Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion Fagin and William J. Fisher was published in 1961. In 1962 was published Doris Alexander's The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill. Further Critical introductions by Clifford Leech's Eugene O'Neill (New York : Grove, 1963) and John Gassner's O'Neill : A collection of Essays (1969) provide a handy sampling of differing approaches to O'Neill's work. Critical literature of O'Neill is further enriched by John Henry Raleigh's book, The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (Carbondale : Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965). The author has studied the plays not in chronological sequence but as an one organic whole made up of a variety of themes, characters and preoccupations. The importance of the book can be traced in the writer's observation that the great late plays of O'Neill are no departures from his earlier plays so far themes and dramatic techniques are concerned. Chester Clayton Long in The Role of Nemesis in the Structure of Selected Plays by Eugene O'Neill (The Hague : Mouton, 1968) avoids the biographical part in the examination of the plays. The critics have looked upon this work as an important piece of O'Neill scholarship. Published earlier, Jordan Y. Miller's Eugene O'Neill and the American critic (1962) provides a comprehensive biography of O'Neill Criticism. It shows, what importance O'Neill assumed during these years as a playwright. Perhaps the best scholarly studies of O'Neill are those provided by Timo Tiusanen, Egil Tornqvist, and Travis Bogard. Timo Tiusanen in O'Neill's Scenic Images (Princeton : Princeton Univ. Press 1968) concludes that the later plays of O'Neill are in fact his great plays. Egil Tornqvist's A drama of Souls : Studies in O'Neill's Super-naturalistic Technique (New Haven : Yale Univ. Press, 1969) is a

very important contribution to O'Neill criticism. Here Tornqvist has made a comprehensive study of the plays. **Contour in Time : The Plays of Eugene O'Neill** (New York : Oxford University Press, 1972) by Travis Bogard contains outstanding discussions of the individual plays having their main focus on the autobiographical elements in the work. This work is one of the best studies on O'Neill.

In the 1970S there has been no dearth of O'Neill criticism. Leonard Chabrowe published **Ritual and Pathos : The Theatre of O'Neill** (Leiwisburg : Bucknell Univ. Press, 1976). In 1977 appeared Harry Cronin's **Eugene O'Neill Irish and American : A Study in Cultural Context** (New York : 1977). These critical studies indicate that as the years move on, newer investigations in the plays have surfaced O'Neill criticism. Jean Chothia in **Forging A Language : A Study of the Plays of Eugene O'Neill** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) centers on the linguistic medium of O'Neill's plays from low-colloquial through Irish dialect, Broadway slang and idiomatic American English to poetic prose. Chothia further shows that O'Neill's dramatic language is much more poetic and effective than is commonly acknowledged.

In the 80S with the publication of a few important works on O'Neill, O'Neill was viewed in other perspectives. **Eugene O'Neill at work : Newly Released Ideas for Plays** (New York : Ungar 1981) edited by Virginia Floyd, released much new O'Neill material. Critics and scholars have welcomed the

publication of Normand Berlin's Eugene O'Neill (New York : Grove, 1982). Berlin has made all out efforts to bring to the fore all important areas of O'Neill's plays. John Orlandello's O'Neill on Film (Madison, N. J : Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1982) compares nine O'Neill plays with their film adaptations. In Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship (Syracuse : Syracuse Univ. Press, 1982), Michael Manheim has discussed that the early plays of O'Neill are a series of the autobiographical motifs which his last play, Long Day's Journey so distinctly manifests.

O'Neill criticism does not rest on the individual publications of O'Neill scholars. In the collections of critical essay, O'Neill appeared again and again triumphantly. John Gassner edited O'Neill : A collection of critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. Prentice-Hall, 1964). Jordan Y. Miller in Playwright's Progress : O'Neill and the critics (Chicago : Scott, Foresman, 1965) has reprinted over sixty reviews and essays. So does Ernest G. Griffin in Eugene O'Neill : A Collection of criticism (New York : McGraw - Hill, 1976). This book includes a selected bibliography. Among such lists of publications, Eugene O'Neill : A world view (New York : Unger, 1970) edited by Virginia Floyd presents essays with a European perspective including works by Tiusanen, Leech, Tornquist, Frenz and Peter Egri, among others. In the second section there are six essays of which one essay by Frederick Wilkins and two by Raleigh are of special importance. The comments of performers on O'Neill by Florence Eldridge, Geraldine, Fitzgerald, Ingrid Bergman and stage director Arvin Brown have added special interests to this work.

This above survey has accommodated only a small corpus of O'Neill Criticism in general. In this study we have referred to only such works as have their distinctions in O'Neill studies. The scholarly journals have published from time to time articles on O'Neill by O'Neill scholars. Such articles have shed much light on some aspects which have not been properly investigated before. In the universities around the world, scholars pursued their Ph. D. studies on O'Neill and wrote their dissertations. Such studies of course have enriched the critical literature on O'Neill.

In course of my reading of O'Neill plays, I was drawn to his one-acters. Before O'Neill tried his hand at writing full-length plays, his experiments were launched through one-act plays. While major O'Neill studies are on his full-length plays, his one-act plays have not been to that extent fully attended. There were only a handful of individual studies on these plays. It was Charles Fish in his "Beginnings : O'Neill's *The Web*" (Princeton University Library Chronicle, 27, No. 1 Autumn 1965, 3-20) did this maiden effort. Though Fish focussed chiefly on "*The Web*", he considered briefly other early plays too. Fish had indicated themes that would be recurrent. The four-acters clustered together as the Glencairn cycle were part of the discussion in Ivan H. Walton's *Eugene O'Neill and the Folklore and Folkways of the Sea*, (Western Folklore, 14, 1955, 153-69). He has studied the use of chanties, sailor lore, superstition and language of the seamen. R. Dilworth Rust also discussed the Glencairn cycle with primary focus on "*The Unity of O'Neill's S.S. Glencairn*," (AL, No. 3, November 1965, 280-90) and established Driscoll

as the major linking character in all the plays. "O'Neill's Use of the Displaced Archetype in *The Moon of the Caribbees*", (*West Virginia University Bulletin Philological Papers*, 19 July 1972, 41-44) by Alex Scarbrough pointed to the difference by O'Neill in using the essential elements of the ship, island and sea in his works.

While critics like Travis Bogard and Virginia Floyd have discussed separately each play in their books, there is paucity of critical studies on the one-acters in comparison to the prolific critical literature produced after his great late plays.

The psychological probing for the inner O'Neill needs separate attention. Even with the risk of repetition we must mention **The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill** (Cambridge, Mass :Harvard University Press, 1953) by Edwin A, Engel. Engel traced back O'Neill's debt to Nietzsche and Jung in developing the dominant theme of death in his plays. Same is true for a recent reissue (Staten Island : Gordian Press, 1981) of Doris V. Falk, **Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension : An Interpretive Study of the Plays** (New Burnswick : Rutgers University Press,1958) reflecting the early psychological approach in search of a unifying pattern in O'Neill's plays.

Arthur H. Nethercot dedicated a decade and a half to study "The Psychoanalyzing of Eugene O'Neill", **Modern Drama**, 3, No. 3 (December 1960, pp. 242-56) and "Part - II" - **Modern Drama** 3(February 1961), 357-72, then "The Psychoanalysing of Eugene O'Neill : Postscript,"

Modern Drama, 8, No. 2, (September 1965, 150-155), and " The Psychoanalyzing of Eugene O ' Neill : P.P.S ", Modern Drama 16, No. 1 (June 1973, 35-48). Nethercot started with O Neill's Works but ended with a psychoanalysis of the playwright himself. A step further was Thomas P. McDonnell in " O ' Neill's Drama of the Psyche", Catholic World 197, No. 1, 178, (May 1963) pp. 120 - 125. McDonnell examined the entanglement of O ' Neill's life with his plays with the important revelation that he never ceased to struggle with his Catholic conscience. N. Bryllion Fagin on " Freud on the American Stage" Educational Theatre Journal 2, (1950. pp. 296 - 305) and Egil Tornqvist on " Nietzsche and O ' Neill : A Study in Affinity " Orbis Litterarum 23, (1968, 97 - 126) were other important studies on this aspect. The recent revival of O ' Neill study throughout the world has rather concentrated on this topic. Stephen Watt in his " O ' Neill and Otto Rank : Doubles, Death Instincts and the Trauma of Birth" remarks, "Perhaps the most valuable addition to current understanding of O ' Neill's appropriation from and manipulation of Freudian psychoanalysis is Robert Feldman's recent examination of the death instinct ... "(Critical Approaches to O ' Neill. P. 18).

Hence, to study death wish in relation to Eugene O ' Neill's one-act plays is the main objective of the present dissertation.

CHAPTER II

DEATH WISH

DIGGING THE ROOTS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

*Now more than ever seems it rich to die
To cease upon the midnight with no pain
In such an ecstasy.*

Jamic quotes Keats in A Moon for the Misbegotten.

Death is indeed eternally accepted as a dreadful event. And no thought perhaps weakens man's mind so much as does the contemplation of death. However the nineteenth century brought to the fore Freudian concept of death drive (or more simply the death wish) by which every living being has a tendency to destroy itself. It arose strong ethical and emotional reactions, both against and in favour, throughout the world. The death-fever is still on. This chapter will study the background of Eugene O'Neill's life leading to his obsession with death.

Sigmund Freud described the death drive first in **Beyond the Pleasure Principle** (1920). He postulated that the death instinct is a biological drive to return to the inorganic – the organism reacting to any disturbance to the status quo. The life instinct aims at combining elements into bigger units; it aims at life and propagation. The death instinct, on the contrary, aims at destructuralisation, dissolution and death.

Birth confronts us with the experience of needs. There can be two reactions to this experience, both of which are invariably present in us, although one may dominate the other. One, to seek satisfaction for the needs; and the other, to annihilate the need itself. The first drive is life promoting leading to object seeking, love and eventually object concern. The other drive is destructive. To annihilate the need it fully expresses in annihilating the perceiving and experiencing self as well as anything that is perceived.

The organism may try to defend itself against death drive by deflecting

it to other objects — so that it becomes an aggression. But destructiveness to objects and to self may be very intimately combined — hardly distinguishable from one another. Freud was of the opinion that the death instinct mostly operates silently within the body, seldom with pure manifestations. And libidinisation and sexualisation are invariably manifestations of the death drive. As we may see later both in the life of Eugene and his elder brother Jamie, a continuous pursuit of sexual experiences may be the mask. Here the libido is used to cover up sadism and masochism. The conscious, sensuous pleasure masks the deeper pleasure in inflicting pain and destruction upon others as well as upon the self.

There is also a hidden pleasure in seeking, getting or inflicting pain. In the psychological conflict of life and death drive, there is always the question of triumph — who wins? In enjoying pain the death drive seems to assure itself of triumph over the life-force. Also like any other drive, the death drive seeks satisfaction. And satisfaction of the death drive, short of death, should be in pain.

Eugene O'Neill felt through his life being "... in love with death"¹. However, death drive has assumed other shapes. Consciously or unconsciously the sameness or oneness with mother earth or vast ocean is one such idealised expression of the death drive. The "Nirvana" principle too, beneath its apparent search for constancy actually idealises the death by its rejection of any disturbance that is life. This is how Eugene O'Neill felt of

the ocean (through Edmund Tyron in Long Day's Journey Into Night) : "I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it and for a moment I lost myself — actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of man, to life itself!"²

The role of the external world in structuring a personality, however has also been recognised by the psychologists. The innate drive is always moulded by environmental factors. A significant factor at the early stage of development is the unfolding of the infant-mother relationship.

Infancy presages a basic trust when the mother's concern for the baby communicates to the later a growing sense of faith and assurance. As the baby feels repeatedly that it is loved, cared, fed, clothed — it gradually begins to like the world as a friendly dependable place. If the reverse happens, i.e. if the baby is unfortunately rarely picked up, seldom attended to while crying, or not fed while hungry — the baby develops a "basic distrust" of a cruel world. Only attending to physical needs even is not enough. If the baby feels that it is not loved or wanted, this harsh experience is carried out to the future man making him apprehensive, fearful, even selfish and hostile to others. This has relevance to Eugene's child's world.

Then comes the question of identity — what kind of a person one likes

to be. The primary model is selected from the parent of the same sex — usually a girl plays the role of a mother in her little playhouse, equally good or grudging, and the boy that of a father, equally generous or miser. In this mimicry is involved the psychology of the would be mother or father. Confusion of identity occurs if the primary model is felt unwanted or altogether lacking. A boy child whose father is perennially out, idealises woman power due to the pervading female dominance in the household. Frequently such a boy feels shaky as a male and comes out as an unconfident man always seeking the confident mother role among the female partners. We may see later how this insecurity and the fantasy of mother power (with its invariable libidinisation) haunted Eugene O'Neill throughout his life. His writings bear testimony to that.

Further this discussion needs a reference to God as perceived by Eugene O'Neill. He came of an Irish Catholic family. Catholicism is not a mere individual perception, but a cultural belief. It starts teaching about God long before any active conscious mind develops. Man's hopes, fears and aspirations centre round his belief in that unseen force called God. Gradually the conscious mind of man notices the sharp contradiction between the harsh reality on the one hand and the presence of a benevolent God on the other.

The young Eugene O'Neill had the spiritual crisis early following the illness of his mother and the knowledge of her addiction. Here is how he dramatized his crisis in **Days Without End** in the story of John Loving:

JOHN. Then his mother . . . was taken ill. And the horrible fear came to him that she might die, too.

LOVING. It drove the young idiot into a panic of superstitious remorse. . . .

JOHN. But he still trusted in His Love. . . .

LOVING. So the poor fool prayed and prayed and vowed his life to piety and good works! . . . if his mother were . . .

JOHN. His mother died. And in a frenzy of insane grief —

LOVING. No! In his awakened pride he cursed his God and denied Him, and in revenge, promised his soul to the Devil — on his knees, when everyone thought he was praying!³

Carlotta Monterey, Eugene O'Neill's third wife described him as "a black Irishman, a rough, tough black Irishman"⁴ whereby hinting at that he lost faith in God. But Eugene O'Neill never became truly an atheist. The puritanism of Catholic indoctrination was always deep in him. He never could conquer the secret dread of doing penance for one's sins. Rather his guilt feeling for his apparent loss of faith further fuelled his death wish. Death wish has been a continuity in all his plays. In this dissertation we have studied primarily the one-acters against this background :

"Death is final release, the warm, dark, peace of annihilation."⁵ (John Loving in Day's Without End).

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In The Lay of the Singer's Fall (1912) an immature work of Eugene O'Neill, the playwright had unlocked his heart :

Till the Devil murmured with sneering breath,
 'What think you the blind skies hide?
 There is nothing sure after death but death :'
 — And the soul of the Singer died —

And the lips of the Singer were flecked with red
 And torn with a bitter cry,
 'When Truth and Love and God are dead
 It is time, full time, to die!'
 And the Devil in triumph chuckled low,
 'There is always suicide,
 It's the only logical think I know'.
 And the life of the Singer died.⁶

Eugene O'Neill has often been charged by critics with exploiting murder, suicide, violence and insanity. Insanity figures in a number of his plays. In Ile a whaling captain's wife is driven mad by her isolated life in Arctic waters. In where the Cross is Made, a short play and Gold, a full-length treatment of the same story, a sea captain with the guilt of murder becomes hopelessly obsessed with a dream of buried treasure. In Strange Interlude the heroine resorts to adultery to have a child on learning of hereditary insanity in her

husband's family. In **The Iceman Cometh** a man who has slain his wife is on the verge of lunacy. In **More Stately Mansions** a fastidious soul at odds with reality ends in self-willed madness, while her son, who is at war with himself, narrowly escapes her fate. In **All God's Chillun Got Wings** a young wife breaks down and imagines herself a child again. Arthur H. Nethercot in his article, "Madness in the plays of Eugene O'Neill" had observed that O'Neill's interest in the subject of madness might have been personal. He actually advocated that O'Neill might have been a borderline madman (159-60).

If we look into O'Neill's family, this tendency of self destruction is seen rooted in the genes. Death wish in Eugene O'Neill was a part of the family history. Ella O'Neill was herself addicted to morphine and attempted suicide once in the foggy summer night of 1903 in New London. "It was right after that", O'Neill recollects through Edmund in **Long Day's Journey Into Night**, ". . . Papa and Jamie decided they couldn't hide it from me any more. Jamie told me. I called him a liar; I tried to punch him in the nose. But I knew he wasn't lying. . . . God, it made everything in life seem rotten!".⁷ Eugene O'Neill tried his own part by taking veronal tablets in a cubicle in the hotel 'Jimmy the priest's" in 1912 to end his life. That episode has been drawn by him later (through Michael Cape, a playwright, in **welded**)—" from now on Hell is my home! . . . There's no freedom — while I live . . . Then, why —?. . . An end of loathing — no wounds, no memories — sleep!"⁸

The immediate precipitating stress for the suicidal attempt was his experience of first marriage. He seduced Kathleen Jenkins to marry him and

had a baby when he was only twenty one years old. His escapism got better of him and he tried to shake off the responsibilities. He was married on October 2, 1909 and sailed alone to Honduras soon on October 16, 1909 in a gold search expedition. After being sent back from Honduras due to malaria, he was again on board of the ship "Charles Racin" bound for Buenos Aires. Kathleen with her son was left behind. Kathleen's family was generous in ultimately accepting the divorce without seeking alimony or support for the child. But Eugene had to take part in an arranged show of adultery in a brothel to get the divorce, as this was the only basis for divorce in New York State that time. In his own peculiar way of seeing life, he felt himself humiliated and degraded and tried suicide.

They had a son by this time, Eugene O'Neill Jr. The playwright had no touch with his son right from latter's birth (except a fragmentary visit when the baby was asleep in his cradle). Eugene O'Neill, Jr. became a brilliant classical scholar later. Then true to genesis, he committed suicide on Sept. 25, 1950 slashing his wrists. Eugene O'Neill's second son Shane was picked up on a dope charge in 1948 and from that time on was known as an incurable addict. Shane too followed the fate of committing suicide on June, 22, 1977.

Now we will proceed to study the life of Eugene O'Neill to see how the blend of genetic seeding, the innate drive and the environmental upbringing went a long way in surfacing death wish throughout his works till The Iceman Cometh.

Early in 1885 Mrs. Mary Ellen O'Neill (Ella) was on tour with her actor husband James O'Neill in the West leaving her sons with her mother in their New York apartment. There she got the news that her six years old first son Jamie had contracted measles. One year old infant, Edmund too had been infected with it. Ella packed off immediately but, before she could leave, a telegram reached there with the death news of Edmund.

Ella was psychologically very upset following this incident. So, in 1887, Mr. James O'Neill took his wife to a grand tour in Europe, hoping that this tour would improve upon her chronic low spirit. On returning home Ella learned the news of the bereavement of her dearest mother Mrs. Bridget Quinlan in her absence.

Mr. James O'Neill, always out on tour with his theatre company, thought of another child to keep Ella busy, a way to remain oblivious of the sad memory of losses. Ella with great objection to her husband's suggestion at last yielded to his wish with the hope that her next child might be a girl.

During pregnancy, some doctors prescribed her morphine probably to allay her anxiety, fear and loneliness. Ella continued to take it on her own being pleased with its miraculous effect and eventually turned into an addict. Here is an account of the matter in Long Day's Journey Into Night — "I was so healthy before Edmund was born. . . . But bearing Edmund was the last straw....[Significantly in the play Eugene takes the name of the dead brother, Edmund]...It was n't until after Edmund was born that I had a single

grey hair. Then it began to turn white".⁹ "He has never been happy...I was afraid all the time I carried Edmund. I knew something terrible would happen."¹⁰

Ella under the spell of morphine, could hardly look after the baby. So, the responsibility of bringing up the baby fell on a hired nurse, an English woman called Sarah Jane Bucknell Sandy.

Eugene was found to be a child prone to nervousness; always getting upset and frightened by nothing at all; terrified of the dark unless his mother (by which he meant Sarah) was close by. Few drops of whisky mixed with water was administered to this boy by his father as an anecdote.

James O'Neill was touring perennially and soon after this birth the family grouped together to carry on their life on wheels. Along with the actor, the whole family trouped and traversed. The baby grew up in this rootless existence — always changing places, and persons. The father too was changing. James O'Neill had a busy schedule. The baby saw him everyday in different dresses as different persons. We can contemplate that some of the mannerisms of the different personalities he acted were even reflected in daily family life of actor James O'Neill while further confusing the baby. Born in the Barrett House, a hotel at the north-east corner of 43rd street and Broadway, Eugene O'Neill exclaimed before his death, "I knew it. Born in Goddam hotel room and dying in a hotel room!"¹¹

Sarah Jane Bucknell Sandy, Eugene's substitute mother, had her own

share of grievances against life. She was the oldest of four children of a hard-pressed family bearing the burden of the whole family from an early age. As a result, while other members of her family grew to attain sociable positions, she lived throughout the life of a governess. She was a perfect governess, however, and genuinely devoted herself to the child. But she had a taste for the macabre and the supernatural. An interviewer of O'Neill had expressed, "she had a penchant for horrible tales whether culled from the newspapers or her imagination, and for hours she would regale little Eugene with the sordid episodes, from the latest murder to the furthest terror that her whimsy could contrive. To supplement this the nurse would often take little Eugene to ghastly museums where were displayed the wax effigies of criminals and malformed dumies."¹²

O'Neill's own account in his notes, "Mother love — meaning — Nurse love — world of reality practically unrealised — in background—terror of it emphasised by the nurse's murder stories — terror of dark alone but delight in it when feeling protecting influence (Mother – Nurse – Nuns) about."¹³

Mother Ella was always elusive, and at times stranger under the spell of morphine. The child worshipped his mother, but a distant mother to whom he stretched his arms in vain. Immediate protecting influence was Sarah Sandy — affectionate, able, confident. Sarah planted in him the fantasy of mother power (including her voluminous physique) and also the notion that the world is a terrible place. She stayed with the O'Neills for seven years, the first

formative seven years of Eugene O'Neill. Her influence over Eugene O'Neill can be understood from a later life incident when the playwright directed actress Cybel playing the Mother Earth role in **The Great God Brown** that she should gain weight by several pounds before the stage show.

Whenever Eugene tried to escape from the horror of reality, subconsciously he searched for this mother figure. Firm and sturdy Sarah loomed larger in the light of Ella's short-comings — even the child felt the real mother too frail, too out of touch to cling to or to depend.

Here is **The Great God Brown** — (— Cybel takes off her mask and sits down by Brown's head. He makes an effort to raise himself toward her and she helps him, throwing her kimono over his bare body, drawing his head on to her shoulder).

BROWN. (Snuggling against her — gratefully) The earth is worm.

CYBEL. (Soothingly, looking before her like an idol) Sssh!

Go, to sleep, Billy.

BROWN. Yes, mother.¹⁴

One may note the other side of the same coin in **The Iceman Cometh**:

PARRITT. . . . I've never been any good at deciding things. . . . you remember what mother's like, Larry. She makes all the decisions. She's always decided what I must do. She does n't like anyone to be free but herself. ¹⁵

So, this was the account of Eugene's childhood. Next we may examine Jamie's (Eugene's elder brother) influence on him. This relation was more complex and more enduring.

Jami (James O'Neill, Jr.) never could free himself from the oedipus complex. His mother Ella was the only woman he could love in his life. So the attitude towards his father was an irreconcilable hostility. Of course, Ella herself played a big part in this. Always trying to identify herself with virgin Mary (she wanted to be a nun initially — and in Long Day's Journey Into Night, O'Neill calls her "Mary" rather than "Ella"), she nurtured a feeling of guilt related to sex. Naturally it was projected upon her husband. Her illness, her drug addiction might have a subconscious motive to keep herself free from sexual obligations. Also to justify, she played the role of a neglected housewife. She accused James O'Neill, Sr. in all possible ways — miser; not devoted to family; worst still, causing her drug addiction by calling a cheap quack (instead of a competent doctor to attend her in her third child birth), who gave her mophine. Probably this obsession with virginity prompted her to hope for a girl child through whom she could relieve her early years. James O'Neill, in turn, was a considerate and affectionate man. Probably too affectionate to resist any temperamental outburst of Ella O'Neill. And Ella could successfully implant her misgivings against her husband into her sons' minds.

Here is Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night : "I know

why he wants you sent to a sanatorium. To take you from me! He's always tried to do that. He's been jealous of everyone of my babies! He kept finding ways to make me leave them. . . ."16

James' rebellion against his father shattered every dream that his father dreamt of him. He was generously gifted by nature — personable, quick-witted, brilliant academic performance in the Notre Dame and afterwards at St. John's Preparatory School — but himself deliberately spoilt it all. He started drinking and womanizing very early, became a regular visitor to the brothels. He was expelled from St. John's school in December, 1899, only a few months before he was to become a graduate. His father tried everything for him to make a good living and eventually he failed. At last James O'Neill Sr. installed him in the theatre. Ironically enough he showed some aptitude for acting, won cordial words from the reviewers initially. In The Travelling Salesman independently acting out of his father's towering presence he had consistent good performance. But then, the animosity towards his father took better of him and he used to spoil the performances not only of his own but also of his father and co-actors. He used to come to the stage drunk; sometimes wearing " . . . tights without undergarments, leaving his genitals clearly defined".¹⁷ Above all, always belittling James Sr's achievements — "You call that work?"¹⁸ May be, there was an undercurrent of sympathy in all these from his mother. The father, as usual, was always a bewildered visitor.

James Tyron exclaims in the final moment of Long day's Journey

Into Night as Jamie lies drunk and unconscious in front of him :

"A sweet spectacle for me! My first-born, who I hoped would bear my name in honor and dignity, who showed such brilliant promise!"¹⁹

Jamie's revenge on his father did not end with his own destruction. He had to corrupt Eugene too. He once remarked, "Gene learned sin more easily than other people. I made it easy for him."²⁰ He showed Eugene the path to alcohol and the path to brothels too. He took Eugene first to a whorehouse in New York, still immature for the experience. Not content with these, Jamie had to incite the rebellion in Eugene against his father.

Actually it may be seen as Jamie's revenge on Eugene too; his incestuous desire towards his mother could not bear any rival. Any other male member of the family became a subject of attack. There could be an earthly reason as well. It can be summarised as follows :-

Jamie imparted his measles to infant Edmund. Edmund died. Ella and James tried for another baby, to make up for the loss. Eugene's birth led Ella to morphine addiction. Ella was doomed for life. Jamie could never forget his role in initiating the whole event. To get out of it, he projected his guilt feeling on Eugene as his birth was the instant inciting factor. Eugene, again, was an easy prey. He never could free himself from this guilt complex, — fears about his mother; fears that his family secret might anytime be exposed to the neighbour; and further he was haunted by the feeling that his mother's

lapses might overpower him anyday.

This is what Eugene O'Neill conceived of Jamie's motive later in Long Day's Journey Into Night :

"My putting you wise so you'd learn from my mistakes. Believed that myself at time, but it's a fake. Made my mistakes look good. Made getting drunk romantic. Made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobs they really are. . . . wanted you to fail. . . . I made you! You're my Frankenstein!"²¹

In numerous autobiographical characters O'Neill recreated Jamie and himself. It may be very difficult to determine everytime which portrait represents himself and which one Jamie's.

Generally Eugene got the innocent look of a poet and Jamie that of a destructive cynic. This could well be a projection. As we discussed earlier, the death-wish can take many forms. When it was an escapism — return to mother earth or belonging to the vast ocean — it was the innocent poet that Eugene created from his depth be it Robert Mayo in Beyond the Horizon or Edmund Tyron in Long Day's Journey Into Night. Let us note the feature of Robert in Beyond the Horizon :

"Robert Mayo is discovered sitting on the fence. He is tall, slender young man of twenty three. There is a touch of poet about him expressed in

his high forehead and wide dark eyes. His features are delicate and refined, leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin, — turns his head toward the horizon, gazing out over the fields and hills. His lips move as if he were reciting something to himself."²²

In the end Robert exclaims :

"I'm happy at last — free — free! — freed from the farm — free to wander on and on — eternally ! . . . Is n't it beautiful beyond the hills? . . . I've own to my trip — the right of release — beyond the horizon!"²³

When the death wish was expressed in a manner of destruction, it was frequently projected on Jamie. The audience also fell prey to this. Both the command of O'Neill on his medium and the myth surrounding his family autobiography make the audience believe that whenever Andrew comes as

"... opposite type to Robert . . ." ²⁴ — it must be Jamie. But the creator lives in every character of his creation. At the most the external appearance may be that of Jamie's to produce the counter-effect. Andrew is " . . . handsome in a large-featured manly fashion. . . ." ²⁵ But, then, who is Reuben Light in Dynamo? He is seventeen, tall and thin. His eyes are large, shy and sensitive. His mouth is like his father's. His Jaw is stubborn, his thick hair curly and reddish — blond. He speaks timidly and hesitatingly, . . ." ²⁶

This stubborn jaw is a hint that Reuben has the capacity to seduce and kill his girl friend Ada at the end. To some it may be a departure from the

innocent Eugene portrait. But this is what Carlotta Monterey, Eugene's third wife reminisces about him, "He was a simple man. . . . He was the most stubborn man I've ever known."²⁷ And Louis Sheaffer's description of young O'Neill almost approaches to that of Reuben Light, "In one respect his appearance was deceptive. Though he was everything he seemed – shy, apprehensive on approach, tremblingly sensitive to the world – he had a streak of stubbornness that partook of both his father's peasant durability and his mother's inflexible nature."²⁸

So Eugene O'Neill was living both the lives — or dying both the deaths — in his creation. This Jamie was almost his double identity. As Travis Bogard rightly points out, it is very difficult to categorise, "which is the self? which is the double?"²⁹ Eugene might have a subconscious feeling that the destructive element in him was Jamie's creation. And a guilt feeling might be in work too. So the negative role was frequently projected on Jamie but this was mere a projection. The division between the two identities was also much superfluous. Eben Cabot in Desire Under The Elms, Reuben Light in Dynamo or Orin Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra frequently appeared as condensation of Jamie and Eugene together.

Projection of identity had other faces too. In Long Day's Journey Into Night Jamie exclaims of his mother, "I'd never dreamed before that any woman but whores took dope:"³⁰ This was the mother-whore infatuation which led Jamie to womanizing with "Fat-violet" in the local brothel. Almost as a sequel, Jamie appears in A Moon for the Misbegotten searching for a kind

of mother-whore, and ultimately is satisfied by giant Josie Hogan. Biographical evidence of real Jamie's behaviour after his mother's death gives credence to this story. But who created Cybel, the "full-breasted and wide-hipped"³¹ giant prostitute cum mother earth in The Great God Brown? Whose is the gratification when Eugene observes of Josie Hogan "There is passion in her kiss but it is a tender, protective maternal passion, which he responds to with an instant grateful yielding".³² Do not those feminine figures conform to Sarah Sandy? Eugene O'Neill himself longed for the mother throughout his life in his bedmates — he called Carlotta "Mamma" — but in the play projected this longing in Jamie. Eugene might have some inhibition in facing the truth — this weakness was betrayed repeatedly — might be due to the virgin-Mary guilt complex about the sex imparted from Ella. In Long Day's Journey Into Night (committed to truth), he omits his marriage and divorce to Kathleen Jenkins. And In A Moon for the Misbegotten Josie Hogan pretends to be a whore, but is really a virgin! What real Jamie was in life is not important — he definitely had an overt Oedipal drive — but this is Eugene's search for the mother-whore reflected in Jamie's characterisation.

Here a little elaboration on Oedipus-drive may be relevant, which, according to Freud, develops during the third to the fifth years in the children of both sexes. In this situation the child's libido is directed towards the parent of the opposite sex. The other parent is seen as a rival and feelings of hostility engendered. The child anticipates retaliation because of its own aggressive feelings and in boys they take the form of a castration complex. Freud regarded

the Oedipus situation as being prepotent in the development of character and personality and also for later neurosis and symptom formation.

Freud had been part of O'Neill's knowledge since the early days of Provincetown Players, when Cook and his wife Susan Glaspell had written a satire on the pretensions of Freudian cultists, called **Suppressed Desires**. But there was direct involvement too. In 1926, he had taken part as a subject in Dr. G.V. Hamilton's research into marital problems and at the conclusion had received a brief "Psychoanalytic" counselling from Hamilton. The sessions were conducted for six weeks in the traditional manner of Freudian analysis, with the patient on a black leather couch. Although the principal matter of concern was to put an end to O'Neill's excessive drinking, O'Neill told Macgowan that he was suffering from an Oedipus Complex.³³ The Freudian world was professionally opened to him through Hamilton.

Hamilton's survey, **A Research in Marriage** was published in 1929, the year O'Neill began serious work on **Morning Becomes Electra**. Perhaps more readily available to him, was a popular book derived from the same series of interviews and written, in collaboration with Hamilton, by Kenneth Macgowan, who like O'Neill had offered himself as a subject for the interviews. **What is Wrong With the Marriage** also published in 1929, was essentially Macgowan's book. In a preface, Hamilton acknowledges that Macgowan had made himself a member of the research team and that he had contributed greatly to the analysis of the materials for their human rather than for their criminal value.

Chapter IX of Macgowan's book is titled "Oedipus Rex"; Chapter X is "The Tragedy fo Electra". Macgowan defines the Oedipus Complex in these terms:

"You get a mother complex, in most cases, because your mother loved your father too little and loved you too much. It was as though she said at your birth : 'I don't love my husband, so I'm going to concentrate all my affection on this man-child of mine'. . . . The kind of mother who creates this complex — which Freud named for the Greek King Oedipus who unwittingly killed his father and married his mother — not only develops too great a love for her in her son. She goes on cultivating this abnormal fervor, and dominating his life . . . so tenaciously that often he cannot look on any other woman with longing — or at any rate with enough longing to make him break his chains."³⁴

We can assume, these helped O'Neill in shaping the Electra drama and by the way, making him more aware of his own Oedipal drive. Libidinisaton is an invariable accompaniment of death drive. But also the suppressed catholic faith in Eugene didn't allow him to face it straight.

So up till now we have witnessed the sordid scenario : mother, a woman with guilt and drug-addiction; father having rootless existence in his profession as well as in family; and elder brother, a confirmed cynic with a very strong

love-hate relationship towards Eugene. Such a dismal state of things went a long way in breeding despair and darkness.

If we move from the immediate environment to the big outer world, the same saga continues but with a difference. After all life is a mixed affair for all with joy, sorrow, gain and pain making a checkerboard pattern. But the inner death drive and the aggression always made Eugene bring out the worst in every circumstance. If it was not there, he invented it and then romanticised it. The following account will bear testimony to this.

Agnes Boulton O'Neill, second wife of Eugene O'Neill wonders in his Part of a Long Story (1958): "what made you what you are, what were the hidden stigmata that had wounded you and at times bled with drops of bitterness!"³⁵ Louis Sheaffer reports, "Many persons, among them Hamilton Basso, would be struck by the piercing sadness of his large dark eyes."³⁶ Basso was reminded of the legend "that the people of Ravenna always gave Dante a wide berth when they passed him on the street. The Ravenesse, among whom Dante spent his last years, felt that the poet's burning, baleful eyes had actually looked upon the horrors of hell and that his dark complexion was the result of his being scorched in its sulphurous overheated atmosphere. That's the way I sometimes feel about O'Neill".³⁷

It's not that Eugene grew up perpetually unhappy. There were good times. James O'Neill, Sr. was always a caring father. He never failed to spend money for his family. Ella was always expensively dressed. Eugene and Jamie

in their extreme rebellion continued to subsist on regular flow of cash from James. Reading books, wandering across the wharf, the waters of the Thames, thrilling events of the Boat Day — all brought sweet moments for him. How does then one justify — "It was a great mistake, my being born a man. . . . I will always be a stranger, who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong. . . ." ³⁸

The deeper discontent, however, cannot be overlooked. More than the father's profession, the rootlessness was ingrained in the Irish heritage. Immigrants are always insecure. Back home, the Irish were perpetually under the English oppression. In America too, they faced poverty, prejudice and discrimination. This sense of insecurity led James O'Neill, Sr. in a constant groping for financial stability. This sense of not "belonging" to a society where he actually is, haunted Eugene throughout his life. Eugene O'Neill could never forgive the provincialism of New London he experienced. The Irish family was never accepted by the puritan New Londoners. Particularly because James did not follow other Irishmen to settle in east New London, he bought a home on Pequet Avenue within snobbish wealthy Americans themselves. That James O'Neill was invited to join the leading citizen's club, The Thames Club could not mark the general hatred towards the Irish — "It was n't a friendly town". ³⁹

One must also accept the reality that the total family sensed failure in life. This penetrated deeply into the subconscious state of Eugene. Ella O'Neill

thought that she had spoilt her life — no, it was James O'Neill who spoiled her — probably she could have blossomed into something else — a nun perhaps. James O'Neill always thought that he had spoilt his promise as an actor — no, it was the popularity of Count of Monte Cristo drama that spoiled — he " . . . could have been a great Shakespearean actor. . . . "40 The degree of self-deception is notable. Failure itself may be excusable, but not the excuses. Thus the 'hopeless hope' took off.

His schooling, Louis Sheaffer describes as "Eugene in Exile". But life at the school St. Aloysius was like as in most other Catholic schools. Eugene had plenty of leisures to lose himself in day dreams and reading. Ella used to visit him at times. Eugene himself never communicated with others. Even later when he had enough school mates to overcome the lonely child existence, he sat along the side-lines of fun. Arthur Walter, an instructor wildly liked by youngsters in Betts Academy later, found difficult to draw Eugene out. "He was a fine student when he wanted to be' ",41 and he did well at school. That he felt "abandoned and unloved", was the glimpse of the inner death drive. He was always looking beyond the horizon out somewhere. The monotony and disciplined routine of a school was a direct antithesis to his escapism. Whatever outer event we may account for his growing rebellion, it had its roots within. While law is life, lawlessness is Eugene O'Neill. He started drinking and going to whore-house from his fifteenth year. He was dropped from Princetown College in 1907 and his academic carrier thus came to an end.

Eugene had his own versions too. Life was "burdensome" at St. Aloysius, "pallid and futile" at Betts Academy. And "Princeton was all play and no work". "Why can't our education respond logically to our needs?"⁴² This was the projection of the guilt feeling. Perhaps he came nearer to the truth when he told "I am perhaps excusing myself for the way I loafed and fooled and got as much fun and as little work as I could. . . ." ⁴³. He even despised other boys who took active interest in the proceedings of the school. He thought them "immature", "stupid" and lacking the conviction or courage to rebel against these mindless monotony. Eugene was thus following the shadows of dissatisfaction of Ella and James O'Neill. Envy was the natural outcome.

His behaviour with girls always followed a pattern. We would discuss it later. Meanwhile, what did he actually see in life? Admittedly, he saw the dregs. And dregs were always there. Eugene searched it out and felt homely there. He could not tolerate successful people. Outer success was in his perception marker of inner bankruptcy. "The people who succeed and do not push on to a greater failure are the spiritual middle-classes"⁴⁴. Anybody having enough money was a subject of attack. Even his father's success as Count of Monte Cristo was "easy". Failures were his favourites.

So, it would not be surprising that he tried to romanticise the dreg throughout and made it look bleaker. In October 1909, Eugene went to Honduras as member of a gold searching team in the sands of the river Rio Seale. Life was tough there for all but this was what he wrote on Christmas

Day to his parents, " . . . I give it as my fixed belief that God got his inspiration for Hell after creating Honduras."⁴⁵

His own account of his first sea-voyage on the ship 'Charles Racine' to Buenos Aires bears further testimony to this false romanticisation : "I struck up one day by the wharf in Boston with a bunch of sailors. . . . they took me that afternoon to the captain. Signed up, and the next thing we were off".⁴⁶ The facts are that he was never a member of the racine crew nor the whole thing happened so automatically. It was arranged and a paid voyage by James O'Neill, Sr. — part of the plan to keep Eugene separated from his wife Kathleen — and an agreement was made by the father with the captain of the ship.

After coming back from Buenos Aires, Eugene used to stay in a hotel in New York locally known as "Jimmy the Priest's" after the name of its proprietor. Eugene's later account about it was : "The house was almost coming down".⁴⁷ While biographer Louis Sheaffer reports, "he was dramatizing. Far from ever collapsing, the building . . . was afterward occupied for nearly a half century by a ship's chandler".⁴⁸ Louis Sheaffer contends, "O'Neill started for the bottom under the illusion that he was simply living life to the fullest; instead as one riddled with guilt feelings and unknowingly bent on punishing himself, he was responding to one of the strongest drives in his unconsiou".⁴⁹ This punishing himself almost reached a state of masochism at times. His drinking orgies was part of it. He deliberately banished himself

from Christmas gala; instead, swam with apparent delight in icy waters and perpetually fancied the facts to present himself in an unfavourable light. Even in his tuberculous pleurisy, it seemed to his nurse Olive Evans that a part of him enjoyed the illness. This was the pleasure in pain.

We can compare Eugene O'Neill with others in literature who were prone to dregs. Their work make us realise that how we see the things is no less important than what we see. Eugene's favourite Jack London was one of them. Maxim Gorky can be referred to in greater detail in this connexion. Being orphaned at an early age Gorky had to go to the streets before he was eleven. Gorky did all jobs to get himself fed; experienced much brutality of the pre-revolution Russia and became a tramp. While Eugene took veronal tablets in Jan. 1912 for suicide in Jimmy the Priest's saloon, Gorky was more violent. He shot himself damaging permanently his lungs. Even in 1906 in U.S.A. Gorky was thrown out of hotels. He was angry; at times bitter (hence, the penname Gorky - 'the bitter'), — but never lost faith in life and mankind. In **The Lower Depth**, Luke brings the message "The earth itself is a pilgrim in the heavens".⁵⁰ For God, — "If you believe in Him, He exists. If you don't He doesn't."⁵¹ And lastly "everybody lives for something better to come. That's why we have to be considerate."⁵² "I feel full of hope these days", writes Eugene O'Neill to his biographer Barrett H. Clark, "for noting the way world wags, I am sure that man has definitely decided to destroy himself, and this seems to be the only truly wise decision he has ever made."⁵³

Eugene's temperamental outbursts also need to be noted, not everytime under the spell of a liquor. He used to be seized by uncontrollable fury at times. This was the death drive deflected into aggression. Later Agnes Boulton faced "some sudden and rather dreadful outbursts of violence, and others of bitter nastiness. . . ." ⁵⁴ So the hell Eugene saw was more inside him than outside. The spectre of death loomed large in his dark eyes. He had to keep himself *constantly tortured and haunted*. Only the fuel of self destruction could bring his creativity into light. "He had a compulsive need at times to descend into a private hell of his own makings", ⁵⁵ Louis Sheaffer observes. His death drive had to be satisfied by keeping the wounds fresh.

His behaviour with girls now may be looked upon.

In Servitude written in 1914, wife of the novelist-playwright David Roystone reacts to her husband's affair with other women : —

"I have loved him, loved him, loved him with all my heart and soul. . .

I have been happy in serving him, happy in the knowledge that I have had my little part in helping him to success, happy to be able to shield and protect him." ⁵⁶

In A Touch of the Poet written in 1937 Nora Melody declares about her husband's womanising and neglect upon her —

"I've pride in my love for him! ! I've loved since the day I set eyes on him, and I'll love him till the day

I die ! . . . It's when, if all the fires of hell was
 between you, you'd walk in them gladly to be with him,
 and sing with joy at your own burnin', . . . That's love. . . ."57

There is a gap of thirty three years between the two works. However the women talk almost in the same vein while forwarding Eugene O'Neill's concept for an ideal wife.

But Eugene O'Neill was only expressing his inner craving. He was demanding devotion and total sacrifice of the self from his wife; while being conscious of his own infidelity. He further stressed that she should remain supremely with this servitude and never stand in her husband's frolicking.

Eugene O'Neill throughout his life pursued the Oedipus drive through sex. Sex in life was necessary. It gave him the satisfaction of unifying with mother Ella. But he also wanted the wife to be Sarah Sandy, to shelter him from the terrible world. Olive Evans, his nurse during home treatment of tuberculosis, had rightly suspected that he was actually ". . . in love with love".⁵⁸ The girls were merely the substitutes.

From Kathleen Jenkins to Maibelle Scott, Beatrice Ashe (in between he tried ineffectually to seduce his landlord's daughter Jessica Rippin), Agnes Boulton, Carlotta Monterey — Eugene always seduced the girls for sex; but could tolerate it no more when he had enough of it. He left Kathleen when he had a son. Courtship with Maibelle ended because she refused to sleep with

him. Beatrice was mature enough to observe — "He was always talking about having his head on my breast — that's why, I suppose, I never married him. I felt that he wanted someone to baby him, . . . But I also felt that he would have wanted to possess me, that he wouldn't have let me belong to myself."⁵⁹

Fortunately or not, it happened to Agnes Boulton, " . . . to be alone with me — that was what he wanted. . . ." ⁶⁰ It turned out to be more. Agnes was almost held a captive. Eugene felt free to make prolonged visits to different women, but any similar gesture from Agnes openly led Eugene to forcibly draw her out and even to hit her. In Welded Michale Cape the playwright husband (a self-portrait) demands that his wife, an actress " . . . to have a true sacrament. . . ." " . . . together - forms of our bodies merging into one form;" ⁶¹ In The First Man Curtis Jayson (again a self-portrait) expects his wife, Martha to sacrifice herself to the worship of her husband; and if she is pregnant, she must abort at his command to live " . . . the old, free life together". ⁶² Hence, leaving Agnes with son and daughter, Eugene one day absconded with Carlotta in 1928 the way he had earlier done (1910) to Kathleen.

And there was always the projection of guilt. Kathleen got her share of being drawn in black by the playwright in Bread and Butter and Before Breakfast where a self-centered wife destroys her artist — husband. (Also the maid servant in Long Day's Journey Into Night was named Cathleen). Agnes was decried openly by Eugene O'Neill in his letters to his friends

(Kenneth Macgowan, the drama critic was one of them). In his private notebook as 'Play of Divorced Wife' (1928), Eugene draws that the wife walks out leaving her husband and children ". . . 'father has told them what mother has done' "⁶³

Further we may recall the episode of Louise Bryant in Provincetown. In his first one-acter that he rejected later A Wife for A Life Jack, the young miner in Arizona desert is in love with his old partner's wife. Eugene too fell desperately in love (in his own style) with Louise Bryant while she was engaged with Jack Reed, the famous war correspondent, who wrote Ten Days That Shook The World on the civil war in Mexico. Jack was O'Neill's very close. Not that he didn't feel ashamed to betray his own conscience. But he was helpless. The passion was too powerful to suppress. Friends noted, it was the resemblance of Louise to Agnes Boulton that drew him to the latter, when Louise finally accompanied Reed to Russia.

Eugene O'Neill's later years have been termed by many as Carlotta's years. He married Carlotta Monterey, the actress known more for her beauty rather than her acting, in 1929. Their first acquaintance was through the staging of The Hairy Ape where Carlotta played the role of Mildred, the daughter of a millionaire and ship magnet. Carlotta also had three marriages before and was living single that time. Agnes Boulton and Eugene O'Neill were never well mated. Carlotta was found to be a complete contrast to Agnes. She

knew how to live as he wanted to live. He demanded and got isolated by Carlotta's loving care from the world - his past and even from his friends. Carlotta made herself nurse, companion, house keeper, secretary and anything what Eugene looked for. As rooted in his nature Carlotta had to play the mother's role too.

In 1931 O'Neill returned to New York to attend the rehearsal of Mourning Becomes Electra. Eugene was a celebrity by this time. Ironically the suicide of Carlotta's previous husband Ralph Barton coincided with the event. He shot himself after writing a letter that Carlotta was a person who could have saved him. So the dead was still catching them; if not Eugene's then at least Carlotta's.

Eugene tried to get his old life buried. He started his play based on his marriage to Carlotta which, critics pointed, was no better than Dynamo based on his marriage to Agnes. Days Without End conveyed a feeling of futility. It was not for lack of effort that he failed. The play underwent several drafts and rewritings before the final form. But he was going against his nature only to please Carlotta. The failure was disastrous.

In September, 1932 a frustrated O'Neill completed the sketch of a new play on paper in a single day. It was his blind urge for an escape. Ah, Wilderness! was labelled as a comedy by some, though many critics suspected its true significance. It was an aberration from O'Neill's style but this could have been a deliberate show than real.

In 1936, O'Neill had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He could not make the trip to Sweden. Appendicitis, neuritis, kidney trouble – all were coming in succession. Then started an uncontrollable tremor traced to the days of his past alcoholism. Ten weeks in hospital and two operations could not make him fully recover.

The second World War was in the making. Social values were changing rapidly. People wanted to voice their own resentments against the State and the System. Eugene had little to offer them. He was deeply embedded in his personal anguish and expressing it through his plays. He was being aloof and forgotten. He had spun himself a cocoon inside which he lived. The outer world became as irrelevant to him as he was to the media that time.

He struggled grimly. The only thing he could do throughout his life was writing; but now the tremor of his hands even made that task almost impossible. Doctors called his illness Parkinson's disease, incurable and progressive. His writing became almost wavering lines and it was left for Carlotta to decipher them.

The tragedy of the O'Neills continued in the next generation. His daughter Oona, then eighteen, married Charlie Chaplin who was fifty six and not liked by many for his public scandals. His son Eugene Jr. adopted a bohemian life style with drinking spree much like his father. He married twice and divorced twice. Another son Shane got arrested for possession of drugs while living in slum condition. To cap it all Shane's only baby died of

suffocation in his bed within few months of his birth.

O'Neill found no outlet for his pent up bitterness and ultimately it was projected to Carlotta. Probably he also felt frustrated for not being able to translate into writing the drama which always dominated his thought. By 1943, when he was completing A Moon for the Misbegotten, there were times when he could not grasp a pencil. His mammoth project of producing a whole cycle of generations of an Irish immigrant family settling in America had to be given up half way. His relation to Carlotta came to the brink of separation.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill died on November 27, 1953. He was sixty five. But actually he gave up living long before. It was stated that he found no ultimate answer for his quest. He himself said that he hoped to be a failure. Success was an attribute to mediocrity for him. The bleak pessimism of his last two plays — The Iceman Cometh and Long Days Journey Into Night did not find favour with the critics. They even questioned his dialogue and his dramatic sense. He was held guilty of shallow melodrama and inordinate length. His denunciation of material prosperity too, was pointed by some, lacked depth. What he denounced was what he actually envied, grabbed greedily when it came, and loathed in others. He was also blamed of pretension with unsuccessful attempts in Great God Brown and Lazarus Laughed to deliberate philosophical discourse. But O'Neill stood there alone — obsessed with his saga of rootlessness and loss of faith. One may say he only survived

to tell his tale of "hopeless hope". Louis Sheaffer reports, shortly before his death in a Boston hotel, he emerged from a semistupor, struggled up on his elbows, and cried "Born in a goddam hotel room and dying in a hotel room!"⁶⁴ It was true in more ways than one. He had never been at home in life. His homecoming was completed at death.

Lastly, we may probe the effect and significance of the sea in Eugene O'Neill. The sea has figured prominently throughout Eugene O'Neill's work. In 1927 he started in his note book sketch of a future work titled The Sea - Mother's Son. It was supposed to be an autobiographical work which he ultimately could not accomplish. Over half of O'Neill's dramas nineteen short and seven long plays, were written before 1920; and twelve of them were related to the sea. O'Neill lived by the sea in New London, Provincetown, and also in the later period of life (Tao House).

The Sea, Mother and Death all coalesced with each other in his work. Here is Reuben Light in Dynamo

" . . . I've come to know about her --- how all things end up in her! ---
- We've got the sea in our blood still!. . . there must be a center around
which all this moves, mustn't there? There is in everything else! And that
center must be the Great Mother of Eternal Life, Electricity, and Dynamo is
her Divine Image on earth!. . . She wants some one man to love her purely

and when she finds him worthy she will love him and give him the secret of truth. . . . I know the miracle will happen to me tonight . . . I had a message from my mother last night. I woke up and saw her standing beside my bed. . . . I know she came from the spirit of the Great Mother into which she passed when she died to tell me she had at last found me worthy of her love."⁶⁵

We can reexamine some fragments of this talk, which evince how the death-drive and mother fantasy are being interlaced with death. Unconsciously Reuben Light Prophesies that all things end up in her; and "spirit of the Great Mother into which" his own mother could only pass "when she died". He has brought the sea too, the inorganic. Reuben will also have to die to get at the truth; he has got the "message". But something more "She wants some one man to love her purely." Clearly The Great Mother will not tolerate any other love. Reuben will have to kill his love Ada before his own death. He fires Ada and then exclaims "Mother! . . . where are you? . . . I did it for your sake! . . . Why don't you call to me? . . . don't leave me alone!"⁶⁶ And finally "(pleading to the dynamo like a little boy) I don't want any miracle, Mother! I don't want to know the truth! I only want you to hide me, Mother! Never let me go from you again!"⁶⁷

The sea and its children repeatedly appeared in his plays – from the early one-acters to later full-length masterpieces. He "maternalizes" the sea. Virginia Floyd observes, ". . . making it mysterious, dark and demanding. . . ." This is a possessive mother who kills her unfaithful children. But she is

the ultimate goal too. To belong to her is the final attainment. Sea becomes Mother-Death. Thomas Mann feels :--- "the eyes that rest on the wide ocean and are soothed by the sight of its waves — are those that are already wearied by looking too deeply into the solemn perplexities of life."⁶⁹

Edmund Tyrone exclaims in Long Day's Journey Into Night :

"I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself - actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, because white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity. . . . "⁷⁰

Now we almost circle back to our point of origin. This was the oceanic feeling, the wish to return to the inorganic. The ideal way to end one's life, Eugene felt, was to swim out until one grew tired and finally went under! Let's consider this with Jack London. As Martin Eden (1967) tries to commit suicide by drowning, he automatically starts to swim. He ceased swimming, but the moment he felt water was rising above his mouth his hands struck out sharply with a lifting movement. As he drowns, he feels a tearing pain in his chest. "The hurt was not death, was the thought that oscillated through his reeling consciousness. . . . It was life . . . the pangs of life, this awful suffocating feeling; it was the last blow life could deal him."⁷¹

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CHAPTER III

COMPLETE PLAYS.

**CHRONICLING THE JOURNEY OF
EUGENE O'NEILL**

*You were born with ghosts in your eyes and you were brave enough to
go looking into your own dark. . . .*

Travis Bogard in Contour In Time.

Eugene O'Neill started writing plays at the age of twenty four. A Wife for A Life was his first work. This play was written shortly after his release from a sanatorium on June 3, 1913. More a sketch than a full fledged drama—two men talk and part in a desert – nothing else happens. The old man was searching the world over to find out and murder the lover of his unfaithful wife. His search ends when his target ultimately saves his life. He comes to know the latter's true identity at the end but then hides his own as a supreme sacrifice.

Critics have observed that the form and characters lack insight. However, one cannot fail to notice many of the O'Neilleian elements in this primary work. The Arizona desert plot used in the play was probably conceived in 1912. The playwright tried to ascribe a character to the desert rather than merely using it as a backdrop. This he would do again for the Sea in future. Also notable is the use of the verse " ' . . . Greater love hath no man than this that he giveth his wife for his friend.' "1 He would again use the verse thirty years later in Long Day's Journey Into Night by Jamie "Greater love hath no man than this that he saveth his brother from himself."2 Interestingly some critics also felt that James O'Neill could readily be thought of as the old man. A Wife For A Life suggested resolution of a relationship based on both love and hate as would be done in Long Day's Journey Into Night later. A Wife for A Life is a sketch but probably reflected O'Neill's concept about fate deciding man's destiny.

The Web which Eugene O'Neill often described as his first play, was

also written in 1913. This play shows a prostitute Rose with her tuberculous cough. In the creative world of Eugene prostitutes figure very prominently. Rose was the fore-runner of all. Being a disciple of Strindberg, Eugene symbolised the web to reveal the hopelessly trapped condition of Rose.

The pimp, Steve forces Rose to walk the street in the rain for a customer and demands that she abandons her crying child. To compound Rose's problem O'Neill makes Rose suffer from incurable tuberculosis. The initial title of the one-acter was The Cough. It meant the disease which symbolised an incorrigible social system that destroys the individual. Changing the title itself was a shift more Oneillean in character. Actually this is a reflection from Strindberg that man's struggle to come out of his misery only weaves the strand of this web more tightly. Any act is itself a path to destruction as is shown by Tim Moran, the converted ganster. He tries to save Rose and her child from the villainy of Steve. The revengeful pimp shoots Tim and Rose is arrested for the murder of Tim.

The situation and the dialogue in this one-acter were so akin to Eugene O'Neill that we get repeated applications of the same in his future works.

This is from The Long Voyage Home (1917) :—

The ROUGH,(as they are going out) : This silly bloke'll 'ave the s'prise of 'is life when 'e wakes up on board of 'er. (They laugh. The door closes behind them. Freda moves quickly for the door on the left but Joe gets in her way and stops her).

JOE. (threateningly) Guv us what yer took!

FREDA. Took? I guv yer all 'e 'ad.

JOE. Yer a liar! I seen yer a-playin' yer sneakin' tricks, but yer can't fool Joe. I'm too old a 'and. (Furiously) Guv it to me, yer bloody cow! (He grabs her by the arm.)

FREDA. Lemma alone : I ain't got no —

JOE. (hits her viciously on the side of the jaw. She crumples up on the floor) That'll learn yer!. . . .³

This is from The Iceman Cometh (1939) : —

PEARL. (turns on him — hard and bitter) Aw right, Rocky. We' are whores. You know what dat makes you, don't you?

ROCKEY. (angrily) Look out, now!

MARGIE. A Lousy little pimp, dat's what!

ROCKEY. I'll join yuh! (He gives her a slap on the side of the face).

PEARL. A dirty little Ginny pimp, dat's what!

ROCKEY. (gives her a slap, too) And dat'll loin you! (But they only stare at him with hard sneering eyes).⁴

O'Neill seemingly tried to display the social evils destroying the lives of Rose and Tim from their mutual conversation. But he achieved greater things. Rose and Tim unite in loneliness. A brief understanding blossoms in the relationship of love. Erie Smith, a small fry gambler resembling physically

Tim Moran would repeat the performance in the 1940 one-acter Hughie. Also the confessional moment to bring two isolated souls together would be used far more effectively in Long Day's Journey Into Night later. But after all these, Rose in The Web feels at the end an unseen presence in the room — the playwright yet not clear what it was.

As we move on to Thirst, three people hailing from different social strata — a West Indian Mulatto sailor, one young blond-haired dancer and a middle aged gentleman are cast away on a raft after a shipwreck. From the beginning the sun "glares down straight overhead like a great angry eye of God"⁵ and sharks circle around the raft. Dying of thirst, the young lady is mad and then dead — the two men fight and ultimately fall into the sea. Reference is made to the glaring sun and the sharks again at the end. The three characters can be looked upon as the representatives of three socio-cultural upbringing — the gentleman and the dancer are portrayed as narrow materialists compared to the mulatto sailor. Here we get an idea that the socially oppressed are in reality morally superior to the oppressor class. The mulatto sailor whose inner strength keeps him contented amidst the disaster would show himself in full blossom in All God's Chilluns Got Wings, The Dreamy Kid, A Touch of the Poet or A Moon for the Misbegotton where the Blacks or Irish would be depicted superior to the Whites or Yankees. It is worth noting that the role of the mulatto sailor in "Provincetown" play was performed by O'Neill himself. The technical accuracies of the shipwreck were probably borrowed from the tragedy of the Titanic in 1912. Thirst was

written in 1913 and produced by the Provincetown players in Aug. 1916.

In Thirst the sea also manifests its omnipresence. The tragic vision is gaining ground. The tendency to personify the sea is apparent. The sea is mysterious and angry. It gives shelter to its children. But whoever betrays it while trying to return to the land — is likely to be doomed as would be seen in Yank in Bound East for Cardiff or Olson in The Long Voyage Home.

The first three plays contain a triangular two men — one woman relationship. The woman in A Wife for A life though not seen, but functions as the central force of the play. In The Web and Thirst both the heroines are trapped by two men and also by a third and stronger one, Fate. It was Fate in the first play, whose "unseen presence" is felt in The Web. Thirst illustrates the Oneilleian death drive.

O'Neill wrote to Richard Dana Skinner — "It is undoubtedly true that an author is not always conscious of the deeper implications of the writings while he is actually at work on them, and perhaps never fully becomes aware of all he has revealed."⁶

Fog written in early 1914 bore testimony to this. This was the third one in the series of early sea-tales after Thirst and Warnings. From the very beginning of his dramatic career O'Neill tried to inject supernatural elements into the plays without being aware of their exact significance. That this supernatural consciousness was actually a masked death-wish is established

in Fog. At the closing part of the play Thirst the empty raft was seen "floating in the midst of a great silence"⁷ and the "eerie heat waves"⁷ float upward in the still air. Fog exactly starts from there "A menacing silence, like the genius of the fog, broods over everything."⁸

The initial situation in both Fog and Thirst is identical. In Thirst there was the sailor, the gentleman and the dancer. They take the shape of a businessman, a poet and a peasant-woman with a dead child in Fog. The poet, the first effort to draw a self-portrait, identifies the death-wish when he refuses to be rescued from the sinking ship. Ultimately a steamer rescues them amidst the fog guided by a miraculous cry of the dead child. The woman is also dead at the end and the poet watches the dead with "eyes full of a great longing".⁹ The setting of the play, the mood and the characterisation — all lend to exploration of death hinted by the fog. Travis Bogard remarks, "By drawing himself as the Poet in Fog, O'Neill attempted to give form to an impulse within himself, but the dark substance of the character, all that he could at first discover, was insufficient for understanding."¹⁰

The Moon of the Caribbees was a long stride forward. Among the many insignificant and inconsequential plays that O'Neill was writing at that time, this was a sudden glimpse of what would come much later. The call of the inorganic comes from a distant primitive Negro chant crooning under the lonely moon of the Caribbees. Human alienation is stripped off all pretensions. The subtlety of exposer in this one-acter needed no crude drama. The sea,

the moon and the chant did the trick. When Smitty springs up after being slapped by Pearl and then sinks back in a bitter smile of despair — the last ray of hope is wiped off. Nature has used her last resort to stir the life force; but it has failed. As sure as death, this music will gain its crescendo with time. Later Brutus Jones will plunge wildly with the throb of the tom tom in a dark bewildered night forest in **The Emperor Jones**. (This masterpiece needs further attention Hence, it will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter on the one-acters.)

Beyond the Horizon was O'Neill's first long play to reach the stage.

By common agreement it was the beginning of the new American drama. It was written in 1918 and first staged on Feb 2, 1920. "A play in three acts", it was actually three one-acters in a continuum. Each act is divided into two scenes, one in a farmhouse and the other on an open road. It tells the story of two brothers — the elder Andrew, a practical farmer while loving the earth he ploughs; and Robert, a dreamer and poet, who longs to go to the sea. A love affair between Robert and Ruth, a girl both brothers love, drives Andrew to sea and keeps Robert on the farm. A tragedy of the misfit follows — the dreamer destroys his life. Marriage is seen waning and finally ends in Robert's death. Andrew turns to gambling. The name itself is a clue for beyond life conviction of Eugene O'Neill. The Mayo family closely resembles the O'Neill family, not presented so explicitly in the earlier works. As the curtain rises, Robert Mayo, a self-portrait of the playwright is looking beyond the horizon and reciting something to himself. Then he succumbs to charms of Ruth. At

the end Robert exclaims "I've won to my trip — the right of release — beyond the horizon!"¹¹ Notably Ruth sinks back " . . . into the spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope."¹² "This hopeless hope" would be a central theme in the plays to follow — **The Iceman Cometh** and **Long Day's Journey Into Night** among others. The two men and one woman relationship so akin to Eugene O'Neill was also tried here and would be followed in **Desire Under the Elms** in 1924. The central message, however, remains that man is trapped in life and freedom is, if any, beyond the horizon.

The Hairy Ape has been called America's first morality play in the expressionistic genre.¹³ The play was written in three weeks in December, 1921 and revision completed in 1922. But true to Oneillean nature, a long germination and many sources could be traced back. Obviously the idea was brewing in his sub-conscious mind. The term "Hairy Ape" was first used by Cocky, a seaman in **The Moon of The Caribbees**. The central character Yank directly came from **Bound East for Cardiff** and the Glencairn plays. Yank was the image of a real-life giant Driscoll, who committed suicide in spite of his tough dominance in life. "Why? It was the why of Driscoll's suicide that gave me the germs of the idea"¹³ — informed Eugene O'Neill. He first tried it in a short story in 1917. The story, however, was rejected by the publisher and destroyed by the playwright. The drama begins in the firemen's fore-castle of an ocean liner. "The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. . . . The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed

at."¹⁴ Yank, the strongest and fiercest among the crew declares the cramped ship space "Dis is home" and ridicules others who regret their rotten existence.

It is interesting to note that Eugene O'Neill used the word 'belong' eleven times in the scene one by Yank. But soon Yank's world is seen crumbling when Mildred Douglas, daughter of the steel and shipping magnet screams on seeing him, "Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast!"¹⁵

Yank's sense of belonging breaks apart. Uptil now he believed that his job was worthy and conveyed meaning to his life. He goes out to avenge himself on Mildred's society; and ultimately reaches the prison. This is the zoo for the hairy ape, he thinks. He escapes; and feels betrayed in his own way when his plea to ". . . Blow it often de oith – steel – all de cages. . . ." ¹⁶ arouses hostility among his supposed fellow mates – the industrial workers. He ultimately goes to the real zoo, and the real ape – the gorilla. "You belong" – Yank embraces the gorilla and is crushed to death. The word "belong" is again used in the last scene ten times. As if to strike the point home, O'Neill concludes with ". . . perhaps, the hairy ape at last belongs."¹⁷ Hence 'belonging' can only be found in death.

"No century, it would seem from this play, has ever offered man a more woeful prospect, and in no other play, before or after The Hairy Ape, did Eugene O'Neill so completely knock down, one by one, all of man's illusion."¹⁸ Louis Braussard remarks.

The Hairy Ape had seen many interpretations. The most notable of them has been to classify this as a morality play where the hero represents the modern Everyman in search of values to replace his old lost faith. That O'Neill himself meant this is apparent from the sub title "A comedy of ancient and modern life in eight scenes". But the death wish of the playwright surpassed his own intentions. Obviously, no value is reached at and the The Hairy Ape is a straight forward saga of journey to death. As we have noted earlier in The lay of the Singer's Fall (and also in an unsigned poem by Eugene called "Submarine" in 1917), the journey of rejection that Yank trod was actually a foretell about O'Neill himself. Most of the plays which followed could be taken as variations of the same inner drive.

In Dynamo, written in 1928 Reuben Light loses faith in the old God and discovers the new God in Electricity. Reuben abandones his puritan family. But neither he really loves Ada, daughter of the atheist Superintendent of the hydro-electric plant. He fancies dynamo as the divine image. His mother dies in his absence. He longs to return to the mother too. Consciously or not, Playwright O'Neill fuses mother, death and dynamo together. Reuben's yearning for return to childhood innocence is actually his death drive. Eugene O'Neill writes to George Jean Nathan, — "It is a symbolical and factual biography of what is happening in a large section of the American (and not only American) soul right now. . . . The death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one . . . to find a meaning for life in and to comfort its fears of death with,"¹⁹ Dynamo ultimately

fails to become the religion's substitute. Reuben throws himself upon dynamo. " . . . Reuben's voice rises in a moan that is a mingling of pain and loving consummation, and this cry dies into a sound that is like the crooning of a baby. . . ." ²⁰ Reuben is united with the dynamo and his mother in death. Actually a sequel to The Hairy Ape, Reuben in Dynamo, like Yank can belong only to death.

Then followed Days Without End. From 1927 to 1934 O' Neill struggled for it to overcome his death drive and to believe in God and life. A play in four acts, Days Without End starts with the sub-title for Act One - " Plot for a novel" in John Loving's private office. To stress the split personality, John and Loving are shown as two different persons with Loving wearing a "death mask". John believes in love, and Loving sneers. Second and third acts are "Plot for a novel (continued)". Act Four is " The end of the end". In between the third and fourth draft of this play, he quickly finished his 'comedy' on American middle-class family Ah, Wilderness!. In both the plays critics noted an unusual O' Neill, trying to conceal his grim face under a new spirituality. But while Ah, Wilderness!, conveyed just a feeling that life is not that bad after all, Days Without End desperately strived for faith and solution of man's problem in God. In Ah, wilderness!, O' Neill has introduced at least six or seven of the former O' Neill's pet tragic situations depicting misunderstood boyhood, and some other characters like a gentleman, a prostitute, a drunkard and a spinster and treated them to the very opposite of their old time terror, while giving them the benefit of a

quiet but unmistakable and contagious chuckle. Richard Dana Skinner unwisely tried to describe Days without End as the climax of Eugene's Career, the long search ending in "splendid affirmation instead of death — a play of victory through the great mystical paradox of surrender." ²¹ Richard Miller in Ah, Wilderness!, another self-portrait, returns to domestic sentiment, morality and social hygiene after his petty rebellion. John kneels in prayer at the foot of the Cross in "The End of the End" of Day's Without End, Loving vanishing with his faithlessness. The playwright proclaims, "Love loves forever! Death is dead! . . . life laughs with God's love again! Life laughs with love." ²²

The story behind this story started as early as in 1921 when a beautiful actress was cast in the role of Mildred Douglas in The Hairy Ape. She was Carlotta Monterey. A year later Carlotta married Ralph Barton. She got a divorce in 1925 and met O' Neill again in 1926. In July, 1929 they were married in Paris.

Days Without End saw many drafts in the making and met many ends. It is said, the final form was Eugene's loveletter to Carlotta and it had to end with faith in love and God. It is also said that the Jesuit Priests influenced O' Neill for the Catholic ending, a fact which he regretted for the rest of his life. But he was too honest a playwright to succumb to minor external abstractions. It will be justified to say that he was truly searching something to surpass his death drive. He might have been influenced by T.S. Eliot's conversion from 'The Waste land' too. Ash Wednesday was published in

1930, two years before the first draft of Days Without End. But the lack of conviction was apparent in O'Neill. Day's Without End turned into a Sunday school debate, with Eugene O'Neill unjustly interfering with the gift of faith on one side. It was a deliberate act of filling the empty life with faith in a God whose existence he himself doubted.

Unlike Skinner, Lionel Trilling prophesied in 1936 — "the idyllic life of Ah, Wilderness! for all its warmth, is essentially ironical, almost cynical. For it is only when all magnitude has been removed for humanity by the religious answer and placed in the church and its God that life can be seen as simple and good. . . . But the annihilation of the questioning mind also annihilates the multitudinous world. Day's Without End . . . is cold and bleak;. . . . O'Neill has crept into the dark womb of Mother Church and pulled the universe with him. Perhaps the very violence of the gesture with which he has taken the position of passivity should remind us of his force and of what such force may yet do even in that static and simple dark."²³ Iceman was coming.

O'Neill started writing Mourning Becomes Electra in 1929 (though like O'Neill's other works, a long germinal period preceded it) and finished in 1931. But he struggled with Days Without End for 5 years from 1927 to 1932. This was probably because subject of the Electra Story was akin to his temperament and in Days Without End he was attempting something foreign. He used the plot of Aeschylus's Oresteia in modern New England setting appropriately adopting the Civil War as the Trojan War of the legend.

Autobiographical elements are also writ large on it. Orin is again a combination of Jamie and Eugene. In regard to the Oedipus complex, Christine Mannon is obviously the prototype of Ella. The death of the mother prompts the son to be united with her only through death. The basic story of the play parallels with the Greek trilogy. General Ezra Mannon is prisoned by his wife Christine as she wants to fly with her lover. Adam Brant. Orin Mannon, the son feels betrayed and shoots Brant. Christine commits suicide, so too Orin. Lavinia, the daughter and the brain behind the late murders, chooses isolation.

'LAVINIA. (grimly) Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutter's nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! . . . ²⁴

Eugene O'Neill wanted to make Mourning Becomes Electra a modern psychological play. He made extensive uses of Freudian psychoanalysis with a view to exploring the principal characters. But modern psychoanalysis is not an end in itself, it provides a principal mode of therapy by allowing purgation of hidden inner conflicts. Not that O'Neill was unacquainted with this aspect of psychoanalysis, he deliberately avoided it. He was essentially

following the Greek sense of fate — a relentless course to death. Actually he went further than that, as Lionel Trilling observes: "the contempt for humanity which pervades Dynamo continues in Mourning Becomes Electra, creating, in a sense, the utter hopelessness of that tragedy. Aeschylus has ended his Atreus trilogy on a note of social reconciliation. . . . but O'Neill's version has no touch of this resolution. There is no forgiveness in Mourning Becomes Electra"25

The therapeutic role of psychoanalysis has also been used in literature. Psychoanalysts opine that free association with the patient may ultimately help him to recognise his suppressed desires and complexes. Even one can face one's own death-drive stripped off all guises and may be able to consciously overcome it. But Eugene was in ". . . Love with death".26 Neither he nor his characters wished to live. When Orin bends over the dead Brant, he cries, ". . . He looks like me, too! May be I've committed suicide!"27 Eugene was playing suicide, again and again. Even when Lavinia, with departure from the classic legend, opts for a sole living death, shuts the door against life — "Always the dead between! It's no good trying any more!"28

Orin Mannon expressed to Hazel, "The only love I can know now is the love for guilt which breeds more guilt — until you get so deep at the bottom of hell there is no lower you can sink and you rest there in peace!"29 Previously in Strange Interlude too Nina Leeds would ". . . dive for the gutter just to get the security that comes from knowing she's touched bottom

and there's no further to go!"³⁰ And in Harry Hope's Saloon in The Iceman Cometh Eugene as Larry Slade declares, "It's the no chance Saloon. It's Bedrock Bar, The End of the Line Cafe. The Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller! Don't you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they're going next, because there is no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them. . . ." ³¹ Days Without End was actually a strange interlude in the journey. And Iceman was coming.

"But at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh." (Mathew 25 : 6). So comes the Iceman Hickey as a messiah of death to Harry Hope's Saloon. The derelicts there in their 'Last Harbour' indulge themselves in pip-dreams of former and future glory. Only Larry Slade (O'Neill himself), the former anarchist knows the truth —

"Lo, sleep is good; better is death; in sooth,

The best of all were never to be born"³² but he also knows " . . . To hell with the truth! As the history of the world proves, the truth has no bearing on anything. . . . The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober. . . ." ³³ It is this last refuge, the pipe dreams of "Tomorrow" that Hicky comes to shatter. All the inhabitants waiting for a generous and entertaining Hicky and get a sermonizing Hicky instead. He wants all to face themselves; and persuades them, individually, to go out the next day for doing what they have always dreamed of doing. Larry

rightly gets suspicious " . . . it's a second feast of Belshazzar, with Hicky to do the writing on the wall!"³⁴ But Hicky's reform actually sends others out next morning for materialising their dreams. Hicky himself predicts "By tonight they'll all be here again. . . . that's the whole point."³⁵ Now his message becomes clear, " . . . You've faced the truth about yourself. You've done what you had to do to kill your nagging pipe dreams. Oh, I know it knocks you cold. But only for a minute. Then you see it was the only possible way to peace. And you feel happy."³⁶ Hicky himself has murdered his wife for eternally forgiving his debauchery. At the end, all discover their new illusion to hide from life — that they were deliberately toeing the lines of an insane Hickey. Larry again is left out, — ". . . I'm the only real convert to death Hicky made here. . . ." ³⁷ One can consider this with Gorky in The Lower Depths , " it isn't always truth that's what ails a man — you can't always cure the soul with truth,"³⁸ and "everybody lives for something better to come."³⁹

The sub-plot of Don Parritt adds dimension to the death message. Rosa Parritt, Don Parritt's mother and Larry Slade's former paramour has been sent to jail for her radical movement. Don himself has betrayed his mother to the police and Larry shows him the way to suicide to end his torment. Larry accepts the sort of living punishment that Lavinia Mannon accepted in Mourning Becomes Electra. The death of the human spirit thus becomes the ultimate attainment of The Iceman Cometh.

In 1930 Eugene O'Neill stated, "All the most dramatic episodes of my

life I have so far kept out of my plays. . . . "40 In Long Day's Journey Into Night written shortly after the completion of The Iceman Cometh, he ultimately gathered courage (and vision) to trace back the origin of his death-drive in his own family seeding. The Iceman's saloon concentrated further on the ghosts within the family. All the four Tyrone's are gradually stripped off their pretensions.

The play starts and ends in the "Living room of the Tyrone's summer home".41 Act one starts at 8.30 A.M., Act two at 12.45 noon, Act three "around 6.30 that evening" and Act four "around midnight". In the beginning, "Sunshine comes through the windows . . . ",42 and there are laughs and smiles. As the time progresses, the sunshine disappears, fog returns, fog-horn sounds like the distant Negro chant in The Moon of the Caribbees. The effective space diminishes to the area lighted by a single bulb over the central table in the room. The males become more and more drunk to hide their sufferings. Mary drowns more and more under the spell of morphine. They start as a family, end as haunted individuals acutely aware of their alienation. The inward journey of isolation continues till Mary under her dope spell enters in a dream like stance.

"(. . . . They stare at her. She seems aware of them merely as she is aware of other objects in the room, the furniture, the windows, familiar things she accepts automatically as naturally belonging their but which she is too preoccupied to notice.)

JAMIE — (breaks the cracking silence — bitterly, self – defensively sardonic). The Mad Scene. Enter Ophelia! (His father and brother both turn on him fiercely. Edmund is quicker. He slaps Jamie across the mouth with the back of his hand.)

TYRONE — (his voice trembling with suppressed fury) Good boy, Edmund. The dirty blackguard! His own mother!

JAMIE — (mumbles guiltily, without resentment) All right, kid. Had it coming. But I told you how much I'd hopped — (He puts his hands over his face and begins to sob.)

MARY — I play so badly now. I'm all out of practice. Sister Theresa will give me a dreadful scolding. . . . what is it I'm looking for? I know it's something I lost. . . . Something I miss terribly. It can't be altogether lost. . . . I can't have lost it forever, I would die if I thought that. . . . something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time."⁴³ Home, happiness, love all end in total death. It was " . . . to face my dead at last. . . ." declared Eugene O'Neill in the play's dedication to Carlotta. It was a play which had its creator to "come out of his study at the end of a day gaunt and sometimes weeping. His eyes would be all red and he looked ten years older than when he went in in the morning."⁴⁴

Long before, in 1907, he had discovered Nietzsche in Tucker's book shop. It immediately proved prophetic for him. The author of Thus Spake Zarathustra (Nietzsche too, suffered from recurrent psychosomatic illness) echoed the story of his own heart: "God is dead; of his pity for man hath

God died."⁴⁵ — "There is no devil and no hell. Thy soul will be dead even sooner than thy body. Fear, therefore, nothing anymore!"⁴⁶

Travis Bogard agrees, "After the long, poetically oriented quest which he had conducted through the plays of the 1920's, seeking a God to which men could belong, O'Neill at last has come to agree with Nietzsche that men live in a Godless world. . . . in all the outer world there is no where to go, nothing worth having, nothing to which man may make offering as to a God."⁴⁷ But the degree of detachment is notable. O'Neill no longer screams at this thought, shrieks or even mourns. O'Neill has learnt to remain impersonal to these all. "Life is a tragedy, hurry!"⁴⁸ exclaims Jamie in Part of a Long Story.

Kublai Kaan cried in 1923 (Marco Millions) — ". . . . My hideous suspicion is that God is only an infinite, insane energy which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass eternity in avoiding thought. . . ."⁴⁹ "Life is an illusion, death is an awakening. Men call life death and fear it. . . ."⁵⁰

Lazarus's message for salvation is to laugh away the life which is just a strange interlude between two awakenings; death is the life. Peace or Nirvana is not seeking anything from life. Hicky is the last messiah who has come to unshackle the last link with life. Nobody must even dream; no dream can ever be fulfilled; all one can do is to wait for the ultimate peace, joy or laughter in death alone.

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CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIST IN THE MAKING

THE EARLY ONE-ACTERS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

The one-act play, . . . is a fine vehicle for something poetical, for something spiritual in feeling that cannot be carried through a long play.

Eugene O'Neill in New York Herald Tribune.

Before Breakfast apparently is the story of a nagging wife, Mrs. Rowland. She " . . . enters from the bedroom yawning. . . . Her drowsy eyes stare about the room with the irritated look of one to whom a long sleep has not been a long rest. . . . Pours out a large drink and gulps it down. . . ."¹ and does the next thing — search out a letter from her husband's pocket. Her monologue reveals the full tragedy of the fallen angel from riches to a loveless marriage with a dead baby. There is a new love in his life, but it will not succeed. In the end the husband commits suicide by cutting his throat with the razor. On discovering this, the wife " . . . runs shrieking madly into the outer hallway."²

Before Breakfast was first staged at The Playwright's Theatre on December 1, 1916. Probably it was written just before in July 1916, after O'Neill's arrival in Provincetown. It was published in *The Provincetown Plays* (Third series) in December, 1916.

Virginia Floyd opines, "No single source inspired the play's subject matter. . . ."³; while Travis Bogard felt, "In **Before Breakfast**, he drew even closer to his model, and again around a self-portrait wrote a deliberate imitation of **The Stronger**."⁴ This model was Strindberg.

The imitation is obvious. But one can recognise what is essentially O'Neillian in **Before Breakfast**. First is his innermost desire to draw a self-portrait. Alfred Rowland, unheard and unseen, however, shows " . . . a sensitive hand with slender fingers"⁵ with alcoholic tremor — resembling

what O'Neill thought of himself. The story of marriage of the Rowlands revealed by the wife is almost as much a distorted picture as could be that of O'Neill's brief involvement with his first wife Kathleen Jenkins. Mrs. Rowland is drawn in total black conforming to O'Neill's idea of a nagging wife. She is of "medium height . . . shapeless stoutness . . . form-less blue dress. . . . characterless . . . spiteful mouth." and to crown it all " . . . looks much older".⁶ The playwright makes no pretention to reveal which side he favours. Alfred Rowland is gentleman " . . . the millionaire Rowland's only son, the Harvard graduate, the poet, the catch of the town. . . ." ⁷ turned to loafing " . . . around barrooms with that good-for-nothing lot of artists from the square."⁸ " . . . writing silly poetry and stories that no one will buy. . . . " but still " . . . too proud to beg".⁹

The message is very clear. The harsh reality is killing the dreamer. The wife should have considered herself lucky enough to be married to this "honourable" prodigy; and should have borne smiling all the pretty earthly family responsibilities. As we have noted before, this was exactly O'Neill's idea of an ideal wife. O'Neill had the other weakness too. Whoever he disliked, was always drawn in pure black in his plays. Kathleen would be again the sloven maid-servant in Long Day's Journey Into Night. Even O'Neill could be held guilty of distorting the truth. Her "father's only a grocer" " . . . lucky the poor thing was born dead, after all." "with a sort of savage joy"¹⁰ — this lady could never be the real Kathleen Jenkins. In life, Kathleen never accused Eugene of the affair and even did not demand any compensation for the

divorce, while she was left helpless with a baby. Far later, with all his seriousness to depict the O'Neill family in Long Day's Journey Into Night, the self-portrait Edmund evaded this marital affair.

Before settling to writing dramas, Eugene tried his hand at poetry and short story. Before Breakfast can be viewed as a short story. From the beginning, tension rises up to reach the climax at the end. The hero is, of course, Alfred Roland. His ultimate exit is the central event. Mrs. Rowland is just a side character and the narrator as well. She gives us the details about the fallen angel. And the dramatist achieves to represent the external trauma of the hero through her. If the hero is down, then she is the cause. And there is a third girl too. "This Helen must be a fine one. . . . does she write poetry, too? Her letter sounds that way."¹¹ She is the understanding lover; but sad are the ways of life, they cannot meet in this world.

Alfred escapes; as Robert Mayo will do in Beyond the Horizon. "Sensitive", Soul cannot live in this crude world. Eugene glamourises the event. This is a deviation from Strindberg's unsentimental treatment of the conflict. This romanticisation is essentially O'Neillian affair. It is worth noticeable that in a Provincetown production, the sensitive hand was played by the playwright himself. This is the death wish. Eugene O'Neill himself felt that dreams could not be fulfilled here. Goal is, if any — beyond the horizon.

Here we can have a look at the use of monologue in Before Breakfast. Apart from its value as a technical experiment and that it imitated the monologue

of The Stronger, it also foreshadowed a long series of monologues as in The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Strange Interlude, Hughie and The Iceman Cometh. This was very much in O'Neill's blood to express his own alienation. Monologue can be viewed as an O'Neilleian effort by which the characters tried to face their inner-self. Probably Eugene perceived dialogue as a poor medium at times for effective communication. There was no other theatrical way to express himself or his characters but through monologue. A spiral course of probing into one's self followed to reveal the deepest anguish. Eugene dreaded his death wish, but still tried to face it. Monologue was his vehicle in this journey. What started in Before Breakfast, ended in self-discovery of Hickey or Parritt in The Iceman Cometh.

Eugene O'Neill had seen his father having long successful seasons with Broadway productions on the Biblical themes — the early Joseph and His Brethren when Eugene was convalescing in a sanatorium; and later The Wanderer at the end of acting days of James O'Neill (who was seventy that time). Eugene throughout his creations showed the tendency to base his material on other works. But though he collected the germinal idea from them, ultimately such themes assumed a new meaning and significance due to his own approach and interpretation of that subject. The above plays inspired him in utilising the Biblical stories. And he took recourse to the versions of the parables in The Rope, where the Cross is Made, and The Dreamy Kid and of course, in some later works too.

Louise Seaffer writes, James O'Neill at the age of seventy, "appeared to shed years as he began rehearsing for The Wanderer based on the parable of the Prodigal Son. To the old actor, who had long been worried about a rebellious son who wandered off to sea and hung around the most unsavory places, the role of the Jewish Patriarch Jesse must have seemed like type casting. . . . Eugene of course took a dim view of the opus at the opera house; yet it probably was The Wanderer as well as the earlier Joseph and His Brethren that planted the idea in him of using the scriptures in several of his works."¹²

Return of the prodigal son is a central theme in these three one-actres. This is most apparent in The Rope, where Luke Bentley — "Abe's son by a second marriage"¹³ comes "back after five years of bummin" round the rotten old earth. . . . "¹⁴ In Where The Cross is Made, Nat Bartlett returns to the insane dream of his father Captain Isaiah Bartlett to find out the hidden treasure. " 'The treasure is buried where the cross is made' ".¹⁵ The Dreamy kid returns to his grand mother and his childhood innocence being followed by police for killing a white man — " . . . when I heerd it was ole Mammy croakin' and axin' ter see me, I says ter myse'f : 'Dreamy, you gotter make good wid old Mammy no matter what come. . . . ' " ¹⁶

These plays show something more in common. O'Neill's concept of destiny expresses itself in the common goal of unfulfilment for all. In The Rope Abraham Bentley starts with " 'woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out' ".¹⁷ The haunting shadow

extends its evil spell over everything. Luke Bentley returns without repentance intending to rob his father: Mary, the overgrown girl of ten has already been drawn as "stupidly expressionless" and her mother Annie with "dulled irritation." Now Luke appears who "lacks in intelligence" with "half foolish grin" inspite of his "devil may care recklessness". All these meant to make certain that Abraham's real purpose of hanging the rope with hidden bag of gold coins is never understood.

Luke stole one hundred dollars from his father when he was sixteen and ran away from home. Abraham cursed him, hung a rope in the barn, and told him to "hang himself on it when he ever came home agen."¹⁸ The rope becomes the central point of conflict. "From the edge of the loft, half way from the door, a rope about five feet long with an open running noose at the end, is hanging."¹⁹

The basic unhappy atmosphere of a family tormented with suspicion and greed is depicted from the beginning. Abraham enters the barn, discovers his grand daughter, and drives her out, muttering "out O'my sight, you Papist brat! Spawn O'Satan! Spyin' on me!"²⁰ Annie comes, quarrels and exposes how her father Abraham Bentley destroyed his first wife by meanness and how the second wife did the reverse before deserting him and the son whom she claimed was his five year old Luke. She urges him to go to the house to take his medicine but the old man " . . . hits her viciously over the arm with his stick."²¹ The rope is an obsession with him and he guards " . . . to make sure the rope was still there."²²

Pat Sweeney, Annie's husband also wants the hidden dollars but is a more balanced person and wants to make a deal with Luke as he returns. Before father meets the son, the episode of Marry's learning to throw dollars into the ocean from uncle Luke, happens. A little amateurish one may see, rather too much contrived. But at that stage of maturity and probably with some hurry to produce play for the Provincetown players, Eugene had no other short cut to reach the climax.

Abraham becomes extraordinarily excited on discovering Luke back and chants "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."²³ He indicates that he wants the boy to hang himself in the noose. Luke first mockingly agrees and then turns violently on his father. Both Luke and Pat plot to torture the old man to force him declare the hidden gold and leave the barn.

Mary swings on the noose and the bag of gold coins falls on the floor. As learnt from uncle Luke — rather to prove the mockery of destiny, she throws the coins one after another into the ocean.

Travis Bogard declares this " . . . an almost complete failure of imagination".²⁴ But still O'Neill tries to keep the bag of gold hidden from the audience till the end. While Luke and Sweeney go out to search for the hidden money, the last part unfolds in complete silence with only the audience as the sole witness. The audience learns belatedly the purpose of the hanging rope; and now the deeper reflection too. The rope becomes the true instrument of death. The money is gone. Luke's return becomes meaningless. And Abraham

will be murdered. Louis Sheaffer rightly remarks, "The Rope is entirely O'Neill's; raw, bitter, an unvarnished account of some vengeful humans."²⁵

Nat Bartlett knows about his father Captain Isaiah Bartlett that "The things he wants to see can't be made out in daylight. . . ." ²⁶ His ship named after his wife – "The Mary Allen" – went to the sea for a treasure-hunt but was lost in a hurricane.

Captain still waits for the ship and her crew to come back with the hidden treasure. The flash back, i.e., the events of the past are presented through conversation between Nat and a psychiatrist Doctor Higgins. Nat wants to send his father to an asylum. Years back captain had a shipwreck and discovered treasure chests in a tiny island in Indian Ocean. All the men were going mad with hunger and thirst; as a last effort to save the treasure they buried it and drew a map marking the site "Where the cross is made".²⁷ Only three returned alive with captain Bartlett who then mortgaged his house to outfit schooner, the Mary Allen. Captain could not accompany others in their mission as his wife was dying. His madness became apparent as he got the news of Mary Allen "Lost in a hurricane off the celebés with all on board. . . .

— a thing which " . . . he won't believe." ²⁹ The map is still with Nat. But Nat has arranged with Doctor Higgins to send his father to an asylum — quite justifiable as they have to vacate the house to foreclose the mortgage.

Where the Cross is Made like The Rope is a saga of greed and insanity. There are other similarities between the two plays. Captain Isaiah

Bartlett is obsessed, like Abraham Bentley, with the idea that he knows the location of the hidden treasure and that Mary Allen will come back with it. Bartlett also has a son Nat and a daughter Sue who is a widow. Nat, like Luke, tries to betray his father. He holds two grudges against his father. While the first one in relation to "the damned sea he forced me on as a boy — the sea that robbed me of my arm. . . ." ³⁰, the second one originates from ". . . his mad game with me — whispering dreams in my ear. . . . taught me to wait and hope with him . . . made me doubt my brain. . . ." ³¹

Where the Cross is Made is ultimately the destiny of Nat. He is a weak personality compared to his father whose ". . . face is more stern and formidable. . . ." ³² He is torn between common sense and greed — reality and wishful thinking. He expresses that — "I believe — it would be better for him — away — where he couldn't see the sea. He'll forget his mad idea of waiting for a lost ship and a treasure that never was. . . . I believe this!" ³³

The dialogue is interesting. The repetition of "I believe" signifies that he doesn't believe truly what he says. Only after a while he confesses, "when I knew it was all a dream — I couldn't kill it! . . . God forgive me, I still believe!" ³⁴ As a final effort to free himself from the spell, he sets the map on fire.

When Captain Bartlett comes, he shows striking resemblance to his son. This is a favourite trick of O'Neill to prove the genesis. As in Mourning Becomes Electra and numerous other situations, O'Neill used appearance

of his characters both as an expression of the inner self; and also a vehicle to stress home the fact of genetic transmission — of built, and of the inner guilt.

Captain Bartlett declares both Nat's belief in his dream and also inability to sustain the belief — ". . . mockin' at himself, too, for bein' a fool to believe in dreams as he calls 'em".³⁵ No doubt, Nat is a weak personality made weaker by his sudden greed. He quickly becomes hypnotised by his father's insane obsession. What follows is incredible flow of events. Both father and son are convinced of the return of Mary Allen with its crew and gold chests. Eugene O'Neill commented later about this episode " . . . an amusing experiment in treating the audience as insane. . . ." ³⁶ The ghosts of the drowned sailors enter the room with the treasure chests. Still a clever bit of dramaturgy saves the situation. The sister Sue is sane and gives a rational explanation of the illusions of son and father.

BARTLETT. Up they come! Up bullies! . . .

NAT. You here them now?

SUE. Only the rats running about. It's nothing, Nat.³⁷

Success of Eugene O'Neill rests on getting the audience on his side. The story-line was always his fortress. Those who witness the event, see it from both sides. One is with captain Bartlett and his son — because it satisfies a dream and relieves, at least temporarily, of reality and reason. The other part of mind remains rational and neutral, it enjoys the childishness of the

other mind, and with Sue provides a neutral observer of the events for the playwright. When the father dies of a heart attack and Nat solemnly decides to find " 'The treasure is buried where the cross is made,' "³⁸ the cycle is completed. The nothingness is the final message.

A more mature Eugene later resorted to this trick again in Day's Without End. There he relies entirely on the imagination of the audience who see Loving throughout the play but also know that he is invisible to other characters and actually non-existent (as here the ghosts are to Sue and Doctor Higgins).

The possession of one's self by another is also an idea very characteristically O'Neillian. This was actually a hidden conviction of the dramatist himself. It is interesting to note that Where The Cross Is Made was written in "1918 fall": Virginia Floyd quotes from O'Neill's notebook in 1918 an idea of a "long play — Jim and self-showing influence of elder on younger brother".³⁹ Floyd informs, "The alter ego of the hero is described in all the notes for the drama as being Mephistophelian and as having considerable influence over the weaker self."⁴⁰ So repeated versions of this exorcism — father on son (where The Cross is Made), self on self (Days Without End), brother on brother (Long Day's Journey Into Night) will haunt O'Neill till the end.

The idea of pipe dream sustaining life also took their first flight from here. Here was the germination of the central theme of The Iceman Cometh :

NAT. There is no doubt for him or anyone else to cling to. She was sighted bottom up, a complete wreck

HIGGINS. And hasn't your father ever heard —

NAT. He was the first to hear, naturally. . . .

He knows, Doctor, he knows — but he won't believe. He can't — and keep living.⁴¹

Abraham Bentley keeps living in the hope that one day his prodigal son Luke will return. Isaiah Bentley lives for Mary Allen to come back. And in a dimly lit bedroom in New York city Mammy Saunders refuses to die till she meets her grandson Abe — The Dreamy Kid.

Mammy had given the name to her grandson Abe as a baby when the two sat under a willow tree and his big eyes chased "de sun flitterin' froo de grass — an' out on de water —" ⁴² No theme can be more akin to O'Neill than to examine how this dreamy kid becomes an adult gangster. However, the one-acter shows only the end where the self wins — but only at the price of death. Abe has killed a white man and is being chased by the police. Ceely Ann, his mother has called him because Mammy is dying. He comes, inspite of the risk of being followed. Irene, Abe's girl-friend comes and warns him that police has already crossed the front of the house — an escape through the back-door is still possible. But Mammy is not ready to part with her grandson and threatens him with a curse if he does so. Abe now attends the dimension of an epic hero. He sends off Irene by force. —

"(Dreamy gets on one knee beside the bed. There is a sound from the hallway as if someone had made a misstep on the stairs — then silence. Dreamy starts and half aims his gun in the direction of the door. . . .) Dey don't git de Dreamy! Not while he's 'live! Lawd Jesus, no suh!"⁴³

The Dreamy Kid is one of the best one-acters of Eugene O'Neill. The characters are alive, the setting credible and all the actions have been built up by few suggestions. There is no supernatural event taxing on viewer's imagination. There are two killings. None happens on the stage. One such has happened before — leading to the flow of events. And the other is going to happen — police gunning down Dreamy — but the actor ends just before. The viewers see both without seeing anyone.

O'Neill's sympathy with the downtrodden is evident. Dreamy remains dreamy at the end. And the gangster element implies what the society has done to him. Subtly the dramatist hints at racial injustice too. The Negro grandmother and her Abe represent one culture and the police avenging the death of a whiteman, the other. O'Neill understands both the weakness and the greatness of the blacks. Their superstitions — Dreamy truly fears as his grandmother's curse : —

"Dreamy, De game's up, I tole you (With gloomy fatalism) I s'pect it hatter be. Yes, suh. Dey'd git me in de long anyway — and wid her curse de luck'd be again me."⁴⁴ — and their inner strength. The unhappy childhood of an Irishman among the Yanks of New England had on him an indelible

impression. O'Neill felt that the racially suppressed were actually superior in their inner strength, spirituality and integrity to the brutal suppressors. This will bear fruit again in All God's Chillun Got Wings and the The Emperor Jones.

The autobiographical undercurrent in these three one-acters have drawn special attention. Whether the lost ship "Mary Allen" actually had a subconscious reference to O'Neill's mother Mary, Ellen Quinlan (as Louis Sheaffer suggests), may be a matter of conjecture, but similarity of strained relations between Abraham Bentley and Luke to that of James and Eugene cannot be overlooked. The same is true in case of Isaish and Nat. The Negro family of The Dreamy Kid testifies to O'Neill's real life experience about the blacks both in the Hell-Hole and the Greenwich Village.

O'Neill had written during this period another short play which he destroyed after its production by the Provincetown players on March 26, 1920. This was Exorcism, a direct autobiography narrating his suicide attempt. All these indicate that he was deliberately trying to reflect his inner self; of course, the critics have found many technical faults in the above plays. The characters and the setting in The Rope have been accused of lacking in life and imagination. The amateurish and forced plotting have already been referred to. Where The Cross is Made was a quick response to Provincetown's demand for play rearranging the last act of a previous work Gold. However, the central theme in the plays remained remarkably constant. There is an

ageing person, dying, waiting for a child to return which the fate won't allow to happen. Eugene would spell this nothingness more vividly in future. The death wish, one may see, is overtly expressed here, rather a little too blatant, and lacking in depth. The yearning does not have its grip. The holocaust has not enveloped the universe. More subtlety, more insight are yet to come for the consummation of O'Neill's art.

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CHAPTER V

GLIMPSSES OF THE DARK

S.S. GLENCAIRN SERIES OF ONE-ACTERS INCLUDING ILE

There is silence for a second or so, broken only by the haunted, saddened voice of that brooding music, faint and far-off, like the mood of the moonlight made audible.

*Eugene O'Neill in **The Moon of the Caribbees.***

S.S. GLENCAIRN SERIES OF ONE-ACTERS INCLUDING ILE.

Name	Bound East for Cardiff	In the Zone	The Long Voyage Home	Ile	The Moon of the Caribbees
Date of Composition	1914	1917	1917	1917	1917
Date of 1st Production	28th July, 1915	31st October, 1917	2nd November, 1917	30th November, 1917	20th December, 1918
Characters	Yank Driscoll Olson, The Captain Davis, The Second Mate Cocky Smitty Paul Ivan Scotty	Driscoll Swanson Davis Cocky Smitty Paul Ivan Scotty Jack	Driscoll, Olson, Cocky. Fat Joe Nick Mag Ivan Kate Freda Two Roughs	Captain Keeney Mrs. Keeney Ben, the cabin boy Steward Slocum Joe Members of the crew	Yank Driscoll Olson, Fire men Davis, Negresses Cocky, Lamps Smitty, Chips Paul, Old Tom The firstmate Others.
Theme	Yank dies with Driscoll at his bed side. "The fog's lifted."	Action centers around smitty, whose secret letters of his lost love is forcibly unravelled by others. But Swanson replaces Olson, who disappears in <u>The Long Voyage Home</u> (so the exact chronology is not clear. Which preceded the other?) And Yank has already died in <u>Bound East for Cardiff</u> .	Alson trapped and doomed to almost certain death in a dangerous trip as he wishes to leave the sea.	Captain keeney ruthlessly forces his men, wife and himself in a ship locked in ice to wait till the ice breaks and whales are found. He wins, but at the price of Mrs. Keeney's madness.	The entire cast of <u>Bound East for Cardiff</u> reappears here. Smitty, the gentleman here, still aloof and in memory of his lost love (reference to <u>In the Zone</u>) tries to drink himself out.

SOURCE AND INSPIRATION :

O'Neill read Joseph Conrad's novel, The Nigger of the Narcissus on seamen in 1910, before his sea voyage by "Charles Racine" bound for Buenos Aires. It was a paid journey for Eugene. His father paid seventyfive dollars for the fare. In addition to the captain and mates, the "Racine" carried a crew of nineteen. It was a unique experience for Eugene O'Neill. He was not just flying away, but as Louis Sheaffer puts it " . . . he was running towards something. He hoped to find out who he was and what he was. . . .". Joseph Conrad left an abiding impression on him. And Conrad described the Narcissus crew " . . . strong, as those are strong who know neither doubts nor hopes. . . . Men hard to manage, but easy to inspire; voiceless men — but men enough to scorn in their hearts the sentimental voices that had bewailed the hardness of their fate."²

Eugene got the first opportunity to experience this fact himself in the "Racine" men. He saw them from the close. Conrad mentioned that the crew were "the everlasting children of the mysterious sea,"³ This initiated a strong resonance in Eugene's receptive mind. They were his brethren, the first sense of kinship in his life. In 1914, while writing insignificant melodramas like Abortion or The Movie Man, O'Neill suddenly composed a superior one-acter about these people. Children of the Sea was the only title he could think of. On revision, the play got a new title Bound East for Cardiff.

The point of approach, however, was essentially O'Neillian. He did not sympathise with these people. Out of his inherent outlook, he respected

them, glamourised them. This primitive brutal power demanded awe and admiration, but not pity. Also mingled with it was the feeling — "I dissolved in the sea."⁴ He felt to have a glimpse of the behind-life force he was striving for.

Eugene approached Clayton Hamilton in January, 1914, for guidance in writing successful one-act plays. What Hamilton advised, instead was "keep your eye on life — on life as you have seen it; and to hell with the rest."⁵ Hamilton had foresight. But the advice was definitely difficult to follow for a beginner. Writing about one's self with a dispassionate distance of the creator is a tough job. Even with the known autobiographical impulse of O'Neill, he found it elusive to recreate in his work the life of sea he had experienced. But every effort was an improvement upon its previous attempt.

The exact model for "S. S. Glencairn" was the "Ikala", the ship by which Eugene sailed back home from Buenos Aires. It was a freighter with a deck gang of fifteen. Louis Sheaffer writes "on the Chales Racine he had experienced the poetry of life at sea, . . . on the Ikala, . . . he became familiar with the dull labor, the monotonous prose of a seaman's existence".⁶ Nominal pay, full duty, bad food, filthy accommodation — this was the experience which made Yank in Bound East for Cardiff to say "This sailor life ain't much to cry about leavin. . . ."⁷

The crew of Ikala were of different nationalities as Eugene O'Neill had shown them in "S. S. Glencairn" though not all the characters were taken from Ikala alone. Driscoll, Yank, Smitty and others were fruits of other

experiences. En route to New York the "Ikala" had to stop at Port of Spain for several days. Such experiences went a long way in shaping the The Moon of the Caribbees later on and provided other episodes in some other plays of O'Neill. In Buenos Aires, Eugene worked for some days in a German ship, the 'Trimandra.' Its experience was very unpleasant but he had to endure it simply for livelihood. This was evident in The Long Voyage Home. One seaman of Ikala was particularly remembered for his longing for the farm home he left in his childhood. Eugene would share this dream with Yank, Driscoll and Olson later.

NATURE AND SETTING :

George Jean Nathan was the first to observe Eugene's penchant for trilogy. Structure of Mourning Becomes Electra was "a natural outgrowth of a seed that has been in his work since first he began to write".⁸ The germ probably was in his concept, "Repetition of the same scene in its essential spirit, sometimes even in its exact words, but between different characters—following plays as development of fate. . . ."⁹ This sense of fate — the unidirectional movement of a blind destiny compulsively led him to contemplate repeated cycles : Myth Plays for the God Forsaken in 1927, The Sea-Mother's Son in 1929, and later The Cycle of Seven Plays in 1935, spanning nearly two hundred years of American history. All stressed upon repeated motives, parallel actions and similar characters reappearing through generations. The three acts of Beyond the Horizon with three years' and five years' gap between them were also essentially parts of a trilogy. Each act in itself was a complete play—almost an one-acter; and loosely forming a

continuum with others. Nathan did not fail to notice this O'Neillian impulse to trilogy present in the "S. S. Glencairn" series too. Probably unaware at that time, Eugene was examining same set of characters and personalities under different circumstances. But whether the characters truly remained constant we will examine later.

The setting in Bound East for Cardiff is the seamen's forecastle in "S. S. Glencairn" on its way to Cardiff from New York. Yank lies on the bank, injured from an accident. He is dying. He does not fear death itself but the thought of dying alone. All the sailors stand by helplessly including Driscoll who declares that he will not let Yank die. It's a foggy night. Yank mourns, "I wish the stars was out, and the moon, too;. . . ." ¹⁰ Both the men reminisce the stag films in Barracas, the jail in Sydney and their fight at Cape town. Remembrance ends with Yank's death. Yank dies, and only then Cocky enters with the news, "The Fog's lifted." ¹¹

Travis Bogard assumes "Bound East for Cardiff" takes its reality from Conard's The Nigger of the Narcissus, a work O'Neill had read in 1911. . . . Both works turn on the death of a crew member suffering from damaged lungs." ¹² Yank and Driscoll share the life that sea has shaped for them. Throughout the work the sailors commiserate with one another in an effort to cope with their miserable lot. Bound East for Cardiff is different from the previous plays in being a finer work. It was intended to be a tragedy of "ironic fate". But the excess of Thirst and Fog has been subtly removed. In the earlier plays melodrama has been repeatedly used to evoke sympathy for the characters. Yank and Driscoll do not need them. Bound East for

Cardiff is probably the first among O'Neill's plays, that hinges on the idea that the man belongs to the sea.

In the Zone also starts in the forecandle of "S.S. Glencairn" shortly before midnight in the fall of 1915. Smitty, the focal character, does not belong to the crew, but has sought the sea as refuge from his troubles on the land. As the "Glencairn" sails through waters controlled by German submarine, the frightened crew come to think of Smitty as a spy. A black box, in which Smitty carries the letters from his lost love, is taken to be a bomb. Smitty's humiliation is complete as the crew forcibly open and read the letters. The plot may seem "too full of clever theatrical tricks" (O'Neill's letter to Barrett Clark pp 41-42). The growing mistrust between Smitty and other men depends much on superfluous elements. Their inability to understand each other's apprehension and their ease in arousing suspicion in other's minds may not be exactly what happens in life. But this humiliation may have an equalisation effect. Only after this, the other crew may accept Smitty as their own and Smitty also can share his hidden sorrow now that it is revealed to others. While there is a sense of belonging in the play; it however fails to evoke that deep feelings for sea. The sea is seen here just as a background for personal relationships under the stress of war. This play however, gains deeper significance when it is combined with other later "Glencairn plays", particularly The Moon of the Caribbees.

The Long Voyage Home is set entirely on land — "The bar of a low dive on the London water-front — a squalid dingy room. . . ." "It is about nine O'Clock in the evening".¹³

Fat Joe, the proprietor of the bar and Nick, a Crimp are present from the beginning. Nick also declares his intention to shanghai a sailor for the dreaded ship "Amindra". The four men of "Glencairn" - Driscoll, Cocky, Ivan and Olson enter. Typically "The first three are all very drunk. . . . Olson is perfectly sober."¹⁴ Olson has a plan to leave the sea and to return to his family farm which he had tried ineffectively before. This Olson with his childish blue eyes and innocence almost amounting to stupidity is cut out of the herd, doped, robbed and shanghied on the jinxed ship. Two girls Freda and Kate help in the process. When Driscoll and Cocky return after putting intoxicated Ivan to their boarding house, Joe tells them that Olson has gone out with Freda. Driscoll roars "Give me whisky, Irish whisky!"¹⁵

The Long Voyage Home lacks depth unless combined with other "Glencairn plays," particularly The Moon of the Caribbees. The plot is rather too artificial with usual O'Neillian stress on "Ironic fate". The victim is too innocent and the villains are too cunning. Even the playwright himself might not have been aware of the deeper implication of the acts. Apparently it appears that it has stressed on individual fate. But if one studies all the plays as a continuum, the meaning changes. The plotters are mere agents. A greater force from the background sends Olson on his fatal voyage. The sea will not let Olson live for his betrayal to it.

In Ile the play opens with the information that the steam whaling ship "Atlantic Queen" has been locked in ice for a full year and the crew are on the verge of a mutiny. The steward also informs us that captain Keeney is " . . . a hard man as hard as ever sailed the seas."¹⁶ And Mrs. Keeney " . . . as

sweet a woman as ever was . . . may be lose her senses forever."¹⁷ Captain Keeney enters followed by the second mate who warns him about the mutiny. Mrs. Keeney comes, "Her eyes are red from weeping and her face drawn and pale".¹⁸ She longs for a child and longs for home. Captain asserts that he cannot go back without a ship full of oil. The mutiny starts and immediately brutally suppressed by captain in front of her. Mrs. Keeney hints that she is going out of senses. She truly does, only when the ice breaks and whales are seen. "Keeney turns his back on his wife and strides to the doorway. . . ."¹⁹ Mrs. Keeney " . . . is playing wildly and discordantly as the curtain falls."²⁰

Whatever be the situation, Ile is the account of a marriage in which one partner destroys the other. But Eugene is no Strindberg here. The venom of Before Breakfast is absent. There is love which is doomed for destruction.

The Moon of the Caribbees – "Scene. A forward section of the main deck of the British tramp steamer Glencairn, at anchor off an island in the West Indies. The full moon, half-way up the sky, throws a clear light on the deck. The sea is calm and the ship motionless."²¹

"A melancholy Negro chant, faint and far off, drifts crooning, over the water".²²

Most of the seamen and firemen sit on the deck in small groups, waiting for native women to come aboard and bring them rum. The entire cast of Bound East for Cardiff is present here. Smitty is sad and aloof from the beginning. The other men sing and quarrel. Five women appear with their

leader Bella. Pearl, "the youngest and best looking" lingers to talk to Smitty who is indifferent. The rivalry on the deck grows, followed by dance and fight. Paddy is knifed. Pearl slaps Smitty. At the end, everything is quiet again. Smitty goes inside the fore-castle leaving out " . . . the haunted, saddened voice of that brooding music, faint and far-off, like the mood of the moonlight made audible."²³

Primarily a "mood piece" - The Moon of the Caribbees does not depend on plot and characters for its appeal, rather on simplicity which makes it a rare piece of art among world literature. (More about its significance will be discussed at the end of this chapter).

CHARACTERS :

Driscoll and Yank - Both characters are developed from one real life giant Driscoll, the Irishman from the ship "S.S. Philadelphia" whom Eugene met in "Jimmy the Priest's" saloon. He also bore the nickname of Yank as he was a naturalised American. His first impression on Eugene was something bigger than life as Yank in The Hairy Ape is described, "He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength — the grudging respect of fear."²⁴ He personified the vital life force to Eugene with his broad camaraderie and rough affection towards the author. It is a great irony of fate that O'Neill described the death of Yank in Bound East for Cardiff in 1914, and in 1915 Driscoll jumped to death in mid-ocean from "S. S. St. Louis" bound east for Liverpool.

Suicide of Driscoll was one of the most traumatic experiences in Eugene's life. But again it was most akin to his intrinsic death wish, the ultimate denial of life. More forceful, more vibrant will Yank be depicted in his writing, more convincing and more awesome will be his ultimate annihilation. Also it testified to Eugene's growing conviction of men's insignificance to sea. The mother-sea, the mysterious dark revengeful mother will claim back its own children alive or dead.

It is worth noting in Bound East for Cardiff that Driscoll is the leader commanding "grudging respect of fear" from other seamen. He chats with them, laughs with them and also can order "shut your mouths, all av you."²⁵ And this Driscoll admits, " 'Twas Yank here that held me down whin I wanted to jump into the ocean, roarin' mad wid the thirst . . . only Yank in his senses, and him steerin' the boat".²⁶ The double-sketch of the strongman is more apparent in descriptions — Driscoll "a brawny irishman with the battered features of a prize-fighter" and dying Yank " . . . a dark-haired, hard-featured man. . . ." ²⁸ Both Driscoll and Yank share same memories, same discontents, and same future ideas.

Yank is missing in In the Zone and The Long Voyage Home but reappears with Driscoll in The Moon of the Caribbees. Four years have passed since 1914, a maturer Eugene draws Driscoll "a powerfully built Irishman. . . .",²⁹ probably a little irritable; and Yank rather good looking, rough, sitting beside Driscoll, Driscoll is still the leader, and Yank the drunken lover. The broad "camaraderie and rough affection" in Yank is shown when he says "Pals is pals and any pal of mine c'n have anythin' I got, see?"³⁰

Driscoll leads whether in fight or in chorus — "As I was a-roamin' down paradise street —".³¹ But this Yank, inspite of everything, probably runs a second fiddle to Driscoll and exactly not in the same shade of command as depicted in Bound East for Cardiff.

Dirscoll and Yank testify O'Neill's envious appreciation for physical strength and also a hunch that broad mind resides within a broad physique. But herein also stems the idea of the blissful ignorance of these simple people about the exploitation of their might for a system which is not their truly own. This would be the latter Yank of The Hairy Ape.

Smitty : "Extraordinarily handsome, almost too beautiful. . . . younger son of a traditionally noble British family . . . had acquired a university accent . . . suddenly he messed up his life. . . . couldn't bear the thought of daily reminders of what he'd lost — a lady — and decided to try South America. When [he] left a cafe' most of its liquor went along with him."³² This man Eugene met at the Sailor's Opera in Buenos Aires; they roamed together for some time; and provided Eugene, with his penchant for melodramas, the gentle sad Englishmen of the "S. S. Glencairn" series.

Both Yank and Driscoll lament in Bound East for Cardiff the shortcomings of sea-life which include "Never meetin' no nice people. . . ." ³³ This desire for gentility in Eugene produced Smitty — gentleman among the roughs.

Louis Sheaffer suspected this story of the fallen angle rather too perfect

to happen in daily life; and could well be lifted from a " . . . hackneyed fiction."³⁴ Someone might have romanticised the event —the Englishman himself or Eugene. But to Eugene that time truth was not what happened but what might have happened. And Smitty was the fictional counterpart of Eugene's own. Getting drunk for a lost love was a theme that could satisfy among most his sense of romance, adventurism, guilt-feeling for flight from first marriage and his urge for self-destruction.

Smitty plays the role of a minor in **The Moon of the Caribbees**. **The Moon of the Caribbees** claims its superiority to other one-acters simply due to the twin presence of "A melancholy Negro chant, faint and far off . . ."³⁵ and a depressed Smitty with memories he " . . . ought to forget."³⁶ But before that we can observe the evolution of this character.

In **Bound East for Cardiff** Smitty has little role to play. He appears at the later part of the act as "a young Englishman . . ."³⁷ But he appreciates the seriousness of Yank's illness, ~ " steps softly" and talks "whispering " unlike other members of the crew. Then "He crawls to an upper bunk and is soon asleep"³⁸. This is all about him.

Smitty was absent in **The Long Voyage Home**. It might be because he didn't like to visit the dirty dive of Fat Joe for getting drunk. But he becomes the central character of **In the Zone** . Whatever the actual chronology of composition of the plays, O'Neill puts "the action of all the plays following takes place in years preceding the outbreak of the world war"³⁹ excepting **In the Zone** which, naturally happens " . . . about ten minutes of twelve on a

night in the fall of the year 1915".⁴⁰ The loose structural continuity between the one-acters (emphasising that these plays were not initially contemplated as a series) — is apparent here by the treatment Smitty receives from his fellowmates. Though one can argue that war may give birth to suspicion and mutual hatred within any group, if we go by the other one-acters preceding the war — Smitty has long acquaintance with this group and his torture at this stage questions the very legendary camaraderie of the seamen.

Davis, a shipmate who has been present since Bound East for Cardiff scornfully asks " . . . why does he act so s'picious? He's been on ship near two year, ain't he?"⁴¹ and then adds later "An' what d' we know about him when you come to look at it? Nothin'!".⁴² The mist around the Englishman which actually captured the imagination of Eugene, has maximally been exploited for dramatic effect in In the zone. The play opens with Smitty climbing "carefully out of his bunk and " . . . glancing around him suspiciously."⁴³ Then he talks contemptuously when others get scared about hidden submarines. However Eugene has taken help of a known and little over-used stage-trick here. To build up the misunderstanding on the climax, the more other crew suspect him, the more Smitty plays indifferent to them in his "dream", "icy contempt" and "amazment".

To explain the action of the crewmen in believable terms, Eugene brought " . . . a young American with a tough, good-natured face"⁴⁴ for this one-acter only. This Jack may be a double-sketch of Eugene himself, what he actually wanted to look like. Jack keeps the dramatic balance. All the questions audience could ask is presented through Jack giving a chance to Davis and

others to explain themselves. Convincing Jack "He's a crook, aw right"⁴⁵ means convincing a neutral observer.

But Smitty remains different. The difference is in his intellect. He is not one of the herd " . . . he's too much av a bloody gentleman. . . ." ⁴⁶ He does not have any sense of belonging. This alienation would be given more depth and greater dimension in **The Moon of the Caribbees**.

The Moon of the Caribbees shows Smitty "a Young Englishman with a blond mustache. He is sitting on the foresastle head looking out over the water with his chin supported on his hands".⁴⁷ Driscoll first objects to the far off Negro chant. But it is Smitty who really grasps the soreness "It doesn't make a chap feel very cheerful. . . ." ⁴⁸ because "It makes you think of – well – things you ought to forget".⁴⁹

Who wants to forget what? Smitty wants to forget his lost love. Sailors want to forget the sea's ever-present dominance over their life and death.

The chant is the central agent of conflict in **The Moon of the Caribbees**, but it needs a Smitty for unravelling its full significance. A calm sea, a motionless ship and a misty moonlight set the stage for something deep which the sailors are not exactly able to grasp. Smitty feels that the chant conveys the secret loneliness of human existence and its ultimate insignificance to nature. Individuality is the very essence of human intellect and to belong to anything is to sacrifice this individuality — this is the basic dilemma which Smitty is about.

At the end of the **The Moon of the Caribbees** Smitty "gets wearily to his feet and walks with bowed shoulders, staggering a bit, to the fore-castle entrance and goes in".⁵⁰ Immediately he becomes the symbol of modern man— consciously committing himself to the cycle of nothingness that is life. Simultaneously the previous action in **In the Zone** (and in **The Long Voyage Home** and **Bound East for Cardiff**) gets new dimension. One discovers in retrospect, what previously appeared in the preceding one-acters as individual fate truly represented eternal human tragedy. But we may come to this later.

Olson is "a Swede with a drooping blond mustache — with ponderous sarcasm"⁵¹ in **Bound East for Cardiff**; "a stocky, middle-aged Swede with round, childish blue eyes."⁵² and "a good-natured grin"⁵³ in **The Long Voyage Home**; "a squat, surly-faced Swede. . . ." ⁵⁴ in the nickname of Swanson in **In the Zone**; and just one amongst the crowd repeatedly uttering "Py Yingo"⁵⁵ in **The Moon of the Caribbees**. So what is constant in all the plays is only his Swedish origin. The sarcastic person spitting disgustedly in **Bound East for Cardiff** can never be the dreamy innocent victim in **The Long Voyage Home**. Each has been shaped by the demand of the play and suits the purpose of the one-acter without any concern for continuity. There is some semblance of the characters as depicted in **Bound East for Cardiff** and **In the Zone**. So if there was any life source for these characters whom Eugene met, he must have conformed to this type. Actually Eugene consciously made his bunch of sea men multinational to truly represent the children of the sea and Swedes must get their share (one may notice there are too many Swedes (Olson, Max & Maps) in **The Moon of the Caribbees**.

The Long Voyage Home needs special attention because Olson is the central character here. To stress the ultimate fate of abduction, Olson's character has been manipulated almost to non-believable innocence. "He takes out a roll of notes from his inside pocket and lays one on the table".⁵⁶ Then he informs Freda that he carries "plenty money" . . . "two years' pay. . . ."!⁵⁷ All these are said after Dirscoll remembered, " . . . 'twas here I was sthripped av me last shillin' whin I was aslape".⁵⁸ Finally when he says " . . . Don't drink one drink, Ollie, or, sure, you don't get home. And I want go home dis time."⁵⁹ — one who knows O'Neill, can guess what would be the end.

There is no Smitty in The Long Voyage Home. But when Freda says, "yer a gentleman. You don't get drunk an' hinsult poor gels. . . ."!⁶⁰ and Olson explains, "I got nice girl once before I go on sea. But I go on ship, and I don't come back,. . . ."!⁶¹ we almost get the Smitty of The Moon of the Caribbees. The notion that sea claims its own children and punishes any act of betrayal might not have achieved very conscious form in time of writing these plays. Rather, the death wish in Eugene predicted an "ironic life force" — anything sweet and sublime in man would be destroyed and only the rougs and drunks might survive.

This Olson Lacks flesh and blood. But he successfully carries home the message of the play, "Tell Drisc — I go home"⁶² — is his final word. The Long Voyage can only end in the home of death.

Mr. and Mrs. Keeney :

Captain Keeney in search of 'ILe' and his sweet wife dreaming of her

home are the best examples how the early one-acters foreshadowed the latter masterpieces of Eugene O'Neill. The similarity of these two characters with James O'Neill and Ella cannot be overlooked. One can also see how with their habits, pursuit and conviction, they represent the Tyrones of Long Days' Journey Into Night.

Louis Sheaffer reminds us that Ile was based on the true life story of Captain John Cook and his wife Viola. Sheaffer also points out, "Captain Keeney bears a likeness to both the obsessed mariner in Gold and the grantitic old farmer, who prides himself in being hard, in Desire Under the Elms. Mrs. Keeney affords glimpses of the naive heroine in Diff'rent and the wretched young wife in All God's Chillun Got Wings; but there is yet another character she more closely resembles, Mary Tyrone of Long Day's Journey Into Night".⁶³

Apparently it is captain Keeney who destroys his innocent wife. O'Neill uses the word "hard" again and again to describe his sternness. Mrs. Keeney sinks deeper and deeper into insanity as the plays progresses, as if to spite her husband. Almost identical scenes follow in Long Day's Journey Into Night. Keeney bought his wife an organ which she does not play. Mary Tyrone does not use the car her husband has bought for her. Both women reminisce nostalgically their happy pasts including their wedding anniversaries, even it's a month of June for both. Mrs. Keeney has a habit of passing "her hand over her eyes. . . ." ⁶⁴ Mary Tyrone's hands constantly "flutter up to pat her hair".⁶⁵ The ends are alike. James Tyrone hopelessly appeals to Mary but

cannot penetrate her pre-occupation, who stares dreamily before her. Captain Keeney turns back from Mrs. Keeney after failing to bring her into senses who goes on playing the organ. Eugene O'Neill had a peculiar love-hate relationship with his father. The relation was probed deeper in later works. Only a mature O'Neill in Long Day's Journey Into Night could see impassionately how James was misunderstood by all, courtsey to Ella's histrionics. But the tone can be noticed in Ile itself. Though Mrs. Keeney is driven to madness, one cannot blame exclusively the captain for that. He is as harsh as the situation wants him to be. It is Mrs. Keeney's folly not to understand the toughness of sea-life and the elements to make a successful captain. In other words, Mrs. Keeney is herself responsible for her romantic disillusionment.

The decisive power in captain Keeney also makes Ile different from other "Glencairn" plays. In the other plays the characters act according to the sea-mother's dictates; Keeney acts on his own. One can argue that after all the fate wins and not the person. And the act of decision itself leads to destruction. Thus Keeney expresses the death wish of his creator and the same embodied in Olson in The Long Voyage Home or Yank in Bound East for Cardiff.

Crowd :

Louis Sheaffer writes, "The crew members extended themselves in swapping yarns before Eugene . . . They sensed that he more than liked

them, more than sympathized with them; they sensed that he — this was unique in their experience — respected them".⁶⁶ The "Charles Racine" by which Eugene had his maiden sea-journey to Buenos Aires, had a crew of nineteen. The S.S. Ikala, on which Eugene sailed back home, had fifteen. Whatever the degree of respect or romanticism, it didn't obscure Eugene's understanding of the mass character of seamen as playwright. The Donkeyman of The Moon of the Caribbees ("an old greyheaded man with a kindly, wrinkled face")⁶⁷ can be taken as the prototype. He feels no inhibition to declare his opinions.—

"Queer things, mem'ries. I ain't ever been bothered much by 'em".⁶⁸

"Not that I ain't had my share O'things goin' wrong; but I puts 'em out O' me mind, like, an forgets 'em."⁶⁹ If he cannot forget? — "I'd git drunk".⁷⁰

About girls, hitting is "the on'y way to fix 'em when they gits on their high horse."⁷¹ And gentlemen like Smitty failing to do that is the only reason " . . . why they has mem'ries when they hears music."⁷²

The life philosophy is complete. But the maturity of vision also needs special appraisal. The music does not bother him, as he doesn't bother about memories. He can easily prophesize that Smitty is not made for sea and also see through his story which he thinks his very private "she said she threw you over 'cause you was drunk; an' you said you was drunk 'cause she threw you over."⁷³ He also knows that this is " . . . everybod's affair."⁷⁴

Donkeyman Old Tom is the ultimate seaman Eugene tried to grasp. And that he could produce it so easily is the proof of his mastering command

over his medium. This stoic indifference is the result of long look at life. He has almost surpassed the realm of sorrow or delight. The terms playwright uses for Tom are "quietly", "contentedly" "placidly" and even "genially". One can almost compare this to Yeats —

There on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scenes they stare,
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes' mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay. (‘Lapis Lajuli’)

So, there are three sets within the crowd that form the crew of S.S. Glencairn. Driscoll (or say Yank), Scotty, Ivan, Davis form the first set. They are busy in their daily routine of work and drink. They have not learnt to question. They do not perceive anything outside their world. But the faint chant makes them dimly aware of something unwelcome. They get disturbed not knowing exactly for what.

The second set has Smitty alone (or, at the most, Olson of The Long Voyage Home). They feel that they are destined to the slavery of fate and the sea. They cannot share this with others. They bleed.

In the third set there is Old Tom with his "Nirvana" like tranquility. He knows the end in nothingness. Therefore does not question. For he knows, there is no answer.

The ultimate expression of death wish in "S.S. Glencairn" series :

T.S. Eliot's first of the Four Quarters appeared in 1935 with the title of "Burnt Norton". The next Quartet i.e. the second, did not appear until 1940 — the "East Coker". Of more interest is the fact that "Burnt Norton" was actually comprised of the deleted passages from his masterpiece Murder in the Cathedral. It is obvious that at the time of composing "Burnt Norton" Eliot did not intend it as part of a bigger work. Instead, all were produced as separate passages. But the thematic and structural continuity became apparent when all were seen together retrospectively. In other words, "Burnt Norton" became the first quartet only when the later work of second quartet lent significance to it. Leonard Unger of University of Minnesota argued, "Each of the quartets and then all of them together have a greater conventional unity than Eliot's previous nondramatic poetry. . . . Four Quartets is a deliberate and sustained discourse. . . ."75

What we try to highlight from this, is clear from Eliot's own words about his earlier work "Ash Wednesday"——

"Yes, like "The Hollow Men", it originated out of separate poems. . . . Then gradually I came to see it as a sequence. That's one way in which my mind does seem to have worked throughout the years poetically — doing things separately and then seeing the possibility of fusing them together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them."⁷⁶

· Eugene O'Neill had many similarities with T.S. Eliot (it needs a separate

work itself to discuss the matter). But "S.S. Glencairn" series can be used as a model to explain the essential fragmentariness of the works — and then, how later they are fused together, their meaning altered, and made "a kind of whole".⁷⁷

Bound East for Cardiff was written in 1914. It was preceded by **Thirst**, **Fog** and others and immediately followed by **Abortion**. Both **Fog** and **Thirst** open shortly after a shipwreck, and in both the plays, two men and a woman from different social platforms try to survive in a lifeboat amidst a merciless sea. In **Thirst** the sun "glares down straight overhead like a great angry eye of God".⁷⁸ In **Fog** "A menacing silence, like the genius of the fog, broods over everything."⁷⁹ In **Fog**, the cry of the dead child rescues the team. In **Thirst**, they all perish. The message is very clear. There is a God; and he is very angry with men.

If we follow the other one-acters of that period, there is still more violence and tragic ends. Whether in **Recklessness**, **Warnings**, **Bread and Butter** or **Abortion** — the "report of a revolver" was being echoed everywhere. Eugene was sending his heroes indiscriminately to death.

Much later in 1928, Eugene wrote to his wife Agnes Boulton, "it is perhaps not in the nature of living life itself that fine beautiful things may exist for any great length of time, that human beings are fated to destroy just that in each other which constitutes their mutual happiness."⁸⁰

Two things come out of these, forming the framework of O'Neill's super naturalistic ideas — "behind the life force" and "irony of fate". If we go deeper, we get two roots too — his death wish and his Catholic faith imparted since his birth.

At the time of making Yank to die or sending Olson to death-trap, probably this was the primary motive, if not the only one. It was to see the death of a dream. The Catholic doctrine of primary sin was very subconsciously at work. Smitty in In The Zone has first lost his love, and then the recluse in his private memories too.

The titles of the one-acters bear testimony to this. Bound East for Cardiff has the note that this Cardiff will never be reached. The Long Voyage Home immediately creates the picture of a long lonesome fruitless journey (this indicates the journey of mankind too) for a home too far off.

In Bound East for Cardiff what Yank dreamed of, was " . . . a farm with a house of your own . . . a wife and kids to play with at night. . . ."⁸¹ Finally he settled for only, "I wish the stars was out, and the moon too; I c'd lie out on deck and look at them, and it 'd make it easier to go. . . ."⁸² Even this would be denied.

Olson in The Long Voyage Home ends with "I go home" only to get " . . . the surprise of 'is life when 'e wakes up on board of er"⁸³ — that damned ship. Edith's final love-letter to Smitty declares, " . . . you have wrecked my life as you have wrecked your own".⁸⁴ Whether Eugene was

following the Greek or Strindberg, it was a monomeric saga of despair and death.

But The Moon of the Carribbees changes it all. The first reason for it, of course, is the subtlety of expression. No longer he needs to make a dead child cry or create a lady dressed in black. The "Melancholy Negro chant" and the "full moon, half-way up the sky"⁸⁵ do the trick. They prepare the setting for something uncanny and unnatural. Anything can happen in this twilight zone.

Second point of difference in The Moon of the Caribbees is his changed attitude towards the sea. The previous *Glencairn* plays concentrated more on individual characters and their fates – Yank, Smitty and Olson. The sea was in rather a minor role — at the most it provided the backdrop. This is what Eugene wrote in his letter to Barrett Clark about In The Zone — ". . . a situation drama lacking in all spiritual import — there is no big feeling for life. . . ."86. There was no focus on the quality or strength of the sea. In The Moon of the Caribbees, however, all the characters are defined by their relations to the sea. The sea is the central character. Also there is the deep understanding of the sea's control over men's fate. There is no urge or clever contrivance to focus the irony of fate. Rather focus shifts to the tragedy of alienation — alienation from the sea to which all actually belong.

Much has been contemplated about the genesis of the sea-mother's image and its relation to O'Neill's mother-fixation and death wish. What we want to stress here is that The Moon of the Caribbees is the first conscious

presentation of that mysterious concept. Up till now, they were indifferent forces governing men's life. Now they become the wrath or benevolence of a possessive mother. Nor fate is aimlessly "ironic", because every fate is invited by betraying or pleasing the mother. In this light all the "Glencairn" plays acquire ~~a new~~ meaning. What was seen as a personal fate is now seen as the effect of "not belonging" to the sea. Any thought of (Yank), act of (Olson), or sense of (Smitty) betrayal to the mother, will be punished. Sea-mother's son is their ultimate identity; to get "dissolved" into her is the joy, also probably the aim. Travis Bogard points out, "Both [In The Zone and The Long Voyage Hom] hold their focus on individual acts of will and their consequences. Yet when the four Glencairn plays are staged as a cycle, this effect is diminished. . . . That this is so is largely due to the fourth play, The Moon of the Caribbees the theme, developed in the last play, lends depth to the others"⁸⁷ —. This is what was told about Eliot, ". . . an alteration of meaning, a retroactive effect of later elements upon earlier."⁸⁸

The Moon of the Caribbees is a masterpiece. Virginia Floyd agrees, "No other American one-act play evokes the beauty of the sea quite like The Moon of the Caribbees."⁸⁹ Travis Bogard is more categorical in emphasising that this was the first signal O'Neill gave of the achievement of his final plays. Even he thinks more about it "what he gained in this play he did not entirely retain. . . ."⁹⁰ In The Moon of the Caribbees, Cocky calls Paddy "A 'Airy ape'" during a quarrel and thus sows the seed of another bigger work — a typically O'Neillian play that he would write in 1921. The mystical vision of the sea gained in this play would be the undercurrent throughout his all other

major works till Edmund Tyrone would articulate it in Long Day's Journey Into Night "I dissolved in the sea. . .".91

The Moon of the Caribbees Signalled the end of first phase of O'Neill's career. He ventured into full-length plays with lessons learnt from the staging of his one-acters. As we have pointed before many of his techniques like use of monologue, stazing persons for unreal characters and dramatic details were first attempted in the one-acters. Seeds of the principal themes of the larger plays were also sown here. Also, the possibilities that were opened and kept unanswered in the one-acters, drove him to write full-length plays. Passive men, possessive women, surrender and betrayal — all would be tried in different settings and permutations to reach the truth. Actually what T.S. Elliot gained by his intellect, Eugene Gladstone O'Neill did it with his conviction. It can be seen the other way too. That he so superbly mingled the Death wish, Mother and the Sea because he himself was not aware of any distinguishing line between them. He did not deal it by brain but with a child's craving for permanent recluse inside the womb.

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CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Eugene O'Neill had been highly controversial in life. And more so after death. The essence of the whole disagreement lies in his life-vision.

He has been belittled on many grounds. The apparently positive, even aggressive life-vision of modern America is not echoed in him. He was always critical of America for its greed and penchant for material prosperity. He stated, "We've squandered our souls by trying to possess something outside it."¹ This is an anathema to a modern American and herein lies America's dilemma in accepting O'Neill. His philosophy has been questioned. His language, capacity to produce real-life dialogue, even his theatrical sense have been put to test. "The wet sponge of Eugene O'Neill"², "Trying to like O'Neill"², "A minority report"² were just fore-runners of a long line of harsh criticism. Even when Virginia Floyd tries to reinstate him as "America's only dramatist to be awarded the Nobel Prize . . ." with sympathy from Herman Melville "Let America prize and cherish her writers"³, it may not be exactly the homage he deserves.

What, then, makes Eugene O'Neill still relevant today? O'Neill is being read, translated and produced worldwide. Many critics, even grudgingly, have admitted him as the sole tower of American drama. Recent opinion survey in U. S. A. has placed him among one of the ten most important writers of the twentieth century.

Eugene O'Neill was unparalleled in his conviction. There lies his greatness.

It is not just the achievement but the effort. He ceaselessly questioned, stumbled, bled — but never left the pursuit. Even he did not try to remain impartial or distant from his characters like other great authors. All his heroes were self-portraits. There was no feigning when his heroes betrayed, killed or committed suicide. Everywhere was obvious presence of the playwright himself.

We tried to look at this. It has been already agreed upon that " . . . O'Neill's life and his work are fashioned out of the same fabric."⁴ He was the most autobiographical among the writers. It is also often quoted that he was always "a little in love with death."⁵ His deeply rooted scepticism of all earthly success was manifestation of his death wish. We have tried to show that this death wish was the combined product of his genetic seeding, his family environment and his innate drive. The genetic influence has been elaborately traced to an unusually high incidence of suicides and addictions in the O'Neill-family. The home environment included an insecure Irish heritage, rootless family existence, addicted mother and alienation from the society. We have taken help of Freudian concept to explore his innate death drive too.

Next we went in search of the one-acters. We tried to show that he marvelled at this form. But the success of later full-length plays prevented due recognition from coming to the former. We insist that the one-acters were not just the making of Eugene O'Neill, they reflected the total Eugene O'Neill — his achievements and his short-comings. Many, if not all themes and contents of his later plays were present in seed form in his one-acters. Looking O'Neill through his one-acters is like looking at the universe in a

microsom — it is infinitely little but it is there! The success of The Moon of the Caribbees could only be emulated by The Iceman cometh and The Long Day's Journey Into Night.

Eugene's life-vision has been seen from many angles. To us there has been little direct attention to his death drive that exactly is in the core of all. The Nirvana concept and O'Neill's transcendentalism, his oceanic feeling of dissolving into the sea were actually all expressions of this death drive. By the way O'Neill has taken shape of a conscious mirror which exposes the trifles and inadequacies of human life.

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APPENDIX

The Defense of Psychoanalysis in Literature
Long Day's Journey Into Night
 and
A View From The Bridge
 Albert Rothenberg and Eugene D. Shapiro

I

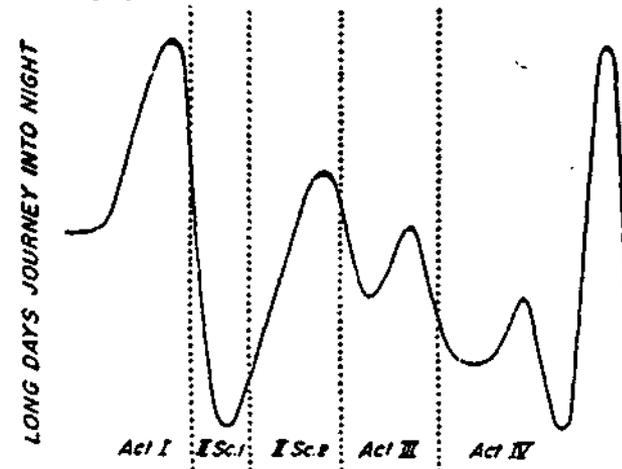
Psychoanalysis and literary criticism were made for each other, if ever two endeavors were.* A psychoanalytic approach to literary criticism merges two intuitive and analytic pathway to the human heart. But this type of criticism had often proved banal and repetitious, reducing literary themes to the ubiquitous Oedipus complex and ignoring form, flux or language. Despite some notable exceptions, there have been serious sins. Psychoanalytic criticism has often ignored the aesthetic integrity of literary work, focusing exclusively on limited elements of play and theme. Or, it has aimed at extraneous and scientifically use justified analyses of the personality of the author in relation to his work.

There is really no reason to challenge the validity of psychoanalysis or to look for some special theoretical flaw accounting for the unsatisfactory showing with respect to literature. Current clinical practice of psychoanalysis involves a type of formed analysis of patients' behavior that lends itself directly to literary criticism. Practicing psychoanalysts routinely analyze formed properties of patient's behavior called psychological defense. Curiously, no one has ever applied such an analysis directly of literature, despite the fact that literature contains the everyday

defenses — even when they are stylized, condensed or designed to make an aesthetic statement — as though they were defenses in living people?

A major difference between a play and everyday life is that characters in a play have no direct effect on our lives. Consequently, our irritation with their defensiveness does not overwhelm us but engages us and stimulates us. We expect a work of art to throw us off balance, and we court the experience of successive stimulation and relaxation again and again. Our reactions to defenses and our experience of tension reduction play a large role in our aesthetic response to the drama.

The following curve illustrates the patterns of tension and tension reduction in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. It is derived from a graph of the numerical distribution of all types of defenses throughout the course of the play.



The play starts with a high level of defensiveness among the characters and a high level tension in the very first act. There are some rather sharp peaks of increased defensiveness at several points throughout the remainder of the play but the overall level

* This investigation was supported by a Public Health Service Research Science Development Award Number MH 23621 from the National Institute of Mental Health.

O' Neill and Otto Rank : Doubles,
" Death Instincts," and the Trauma of Birth

Stephen Watt

" You were born afraid."

Mary Tyrone to Edmund

"But he's dead now [Major Melody].
And I ain't tried a bit. I'm fresh
as a man new born."

Con Melody

"She loves me. I'm not afraid ! . . .
She is warmly around me ! She is my
Skin ! She is my armor ! Now I am
born — I — the I ! — one and indivisible."

Dion anthony

I

In one extremely defensive interior monologue in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928), Charles Marsden contemplates the widespread influence of Sigmund Freud's thought on the American intelligentsia. In doing so, Marsden also predicts what interpretive tools many readers of O'Neill's plays will employ when digging through character's psychological strata : "O Oedipus, O my king! The world is adopting you" (I, 34).¹ Blithely dismissing the Freudian emphases on dream interpretation and "sex" as constitutive of an "easy cure-all," Marsden also anticipates O'Neill's own frustration with the unrelenting stream of Freudian, especially Oedipal, readings of his plays.² The literary critical "world," insofar as O'Neill is concerned, has indeed adopted "Herr Freud," as Marsden refers to him, and King Oedipus as well. Even in studies only remotely psychoanalytic, Freud and oedipus often appear as "givens," figures

Part of a Long Story



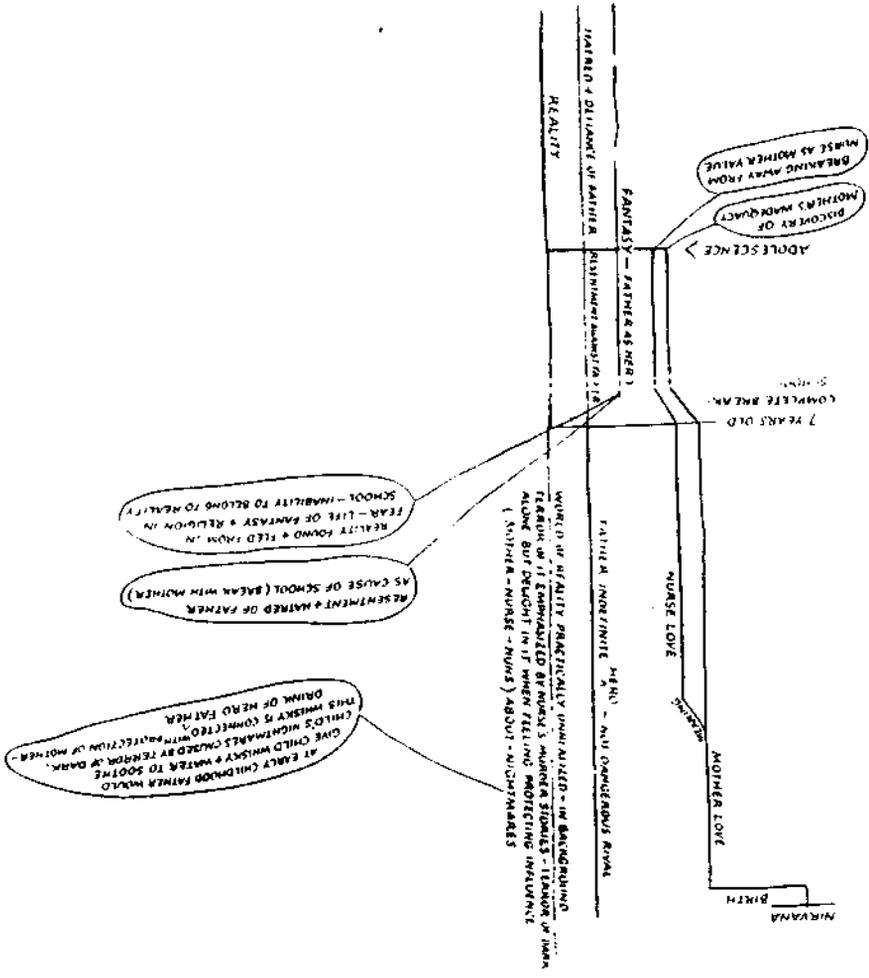
Agnes Boulton

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1958

What Agnes shaw



O' Neill's Diagram — his own effort to understand the force behind
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... Literature 1936 & quote; for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy & quote; **Eugene Gladstone O ' Neill** USA 1888 - 1953 1935 1937 the Nobel Prize in Literature 1936 Prize Presentaton Eugene Gladstone O ' Neill Autobiography Acceptance . . .

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Autobiography of Eugene Gladstone O ' Neill * *

Eugene Gladstone O ' Neill Born October 6th, 1888, in New York City. Son of James O ' Neill, the popular romantic actor. First seven years of my life spent mostly in hotels and railroad trains, my mother accompanying my father on his tours of the United States, although she never was an actress, disliked . . .

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Nobel Prize Laureates ★

. . . and scenic art" 1935 The Prize money was with 1/3 allocated to the Main Fund and with 2/3 to the Special Fund of this prize section 1936 - **Eugene Gladstone O'Neill** " for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy" . . .

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. . . It is an extraordinary privilege that has come to me to take before this gathering of eminent persons the place of my fellow-countryman, Mr. **Eugene O'Neill**, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, who unfortunately is unable to be present here today. It is an extraordinary privilege because the . . .

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Poster 13 *

... ; obscure, esoteric and difficult " (i.e. Paul Valéry). The prizewinners of this decade admittedly include innovators Luigi Pirandello and Eugene O'Neill, but more striking, certainly, were the prizes to Sinclair Lewis, John Galsworthy, and Pearl Buck, authors who could speak to a "wider . . .

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