

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, courtesy 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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