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Class Struggle in Eugene O'Neill's The Hairy Ape: A Marxist Study

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the theme of class struggle in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* through the lens of Marxism. The analysis focuses on the interaction between social classes, highlighting the alienation, exploitation, and ideological manipulation faced by the working class within a capitalist society. The significance of this study lies in its ability to clarify the understanding of class dynamics and ideological struggles within the framework of a capitalist society. By applying Marxist methodology, the study sheds light on the systemic forces of alienation and exploitation that define the experiences of the working class, offering valuable insights into how literature reflects social hierarchies. This analysis not only enhances the appreciation of O'Neill's artistic exploration of class and identity but also contributes to broader academic discussions on the intersections of literature, ideology, and power. Ultimately, the study underscores the enduring relevance of class struggle as a lens for interpreting both historical and contemporary social structures.

Keywords: Eugene O'Neill, *Hairy Ape*, Marxism, Class struggle, Ideology.

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1. Introduction

Eugene Gladston O'Neill (Eugene O'Neill) (1888-1953), was one of the most important American playwrights of the 20th century. His father, James O'Neill was one of the most famous actors of his time and a natural successor to the great Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth. Eugene O'Neill, a prominent American playwright and Nobel Prize winner in Literature 1936, was born in a hotel and spent much of his early childhood in hotel rooms, on trains, and backstage. Despite lamenting the unstable and difficult nature of his early life, which he attributed to his father's actions and his mother's drug addiction, Eugene was deeply connected to the theatre. His upbringing, influenced by his father's harsh Irish Catholicism and his mother's gentler, mystical piety, led to a dramatic internal conflict that became a defining theme in O'Neill's work, particularly his intense exploration of religion and the human struggle with God [1].

O'Neill began his playwriting career during a time of significant social, political, economic, and cultural change. Though he did not start writing plays until 1913, his exposure to theatre began in his early years. His father was already a successful matinee idol when O'Neill was born in 1888. As a child, Eugene was involved in both the backstage aspects of theatre and the audience experience. As he grew older, he became an enthusiastic theatre-goer, attending plays that he enjoyed multiple times, sometimes as many as ten times. Over the course of his life, he witnessed a dramatic shift from the conventional melodramas and formulaic comedies of the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries to serious dramas inspired by European playwrights and unconventional witty comedies reflecting the changing American landscape [2].

Despite his father's wealth and fame, O'Neill faced anti-Irish prejudice firsthand in New London. His Irish characters revealed his deep emotional and political connection to the "shanty" or "bogtrotter" Irish, contrasting them with the capitalist elite, Puritan morals, and the hypocrisy of the socially ambitious "lace-curtain" Irish. The ethnic conflicts in New London and across New England between proud Irish Catholics and the established Yankee Protestant left O'Neill with a strong empathy for America's marginalized communities as a whole. O'Neill faced misfortune head-on throughout his life, both on and off stage. He stood alone, scared, and furious far too frequently. For the Irish, suffering is almost an art form, where psychic and physical pain evoke their greatest adversaries: hope and spirit. These "pipe dreams," as O'Neill called them, or "abject illusions" and "hopeless hopes," are essential for enduring life's trials [1].

Theater enthusiasts are not the only ones captivated by O'Neill's undeniable influence. On the fiftieth anniversary of O'Neill's death in 2003, Cornel West, a prominent African American literary theorist and philosopher, referred to him as "the great American blues man of the theater." West further compared O'Neill to three other pioneers: first, Martin Luther King Jr., noting that O'Neill's plays aimed, like King's speeches, to "redeem the soul of America"; second, jazz legend Charlie Parker, for creating his art through "blood, sweat, and tears"; and third, the Wachowski brothers, creators of the Matrix films, because O'Neill, like them, was a white artist "preoccupied with the humanity of black people." His play *The Emperor Jones*, with its bold focus on a black protagonist, dramatically illustrated what West aptly termed the "unmasking of civilization" [1].

Eugene O'Neill is one of the most prominent playwrights of the twentieth century, as he presented important theatrical works in the history of modern drama. Among his most important works are, *The Straw* (1919), *The Emperor Jones* (1920) *Beyond the Horizon* (1920) (Pulitzer Prize Winner) and *Anna Christie* (1921) *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *The Great God Brown* (1926), *Strange Interlude* (1928) *The Iceman Cometh* (1940), *The Personal Equation* (1915), *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1947) *The Last Will and Testament of Edward Morrell* (1953) [1].

The Hairy Ape was first written by Eugene O'Neill in 1921 and was first produced in 1922. *The Hairy Ape* highlights O'Neill's early artistic accomplishments, while also foreshadowing the themes and perspectives that would become central in his later works [3]. The play presents a compelling critique of modern capitalism, emphasizing how individuals experience become alienated within an industrialized society. The protagonist, Yank, embodies the modern individual whose sense of identity is lost under the weight of machinery and the tensions of class conflict [1]. In *The Hairy Ape*, Yank is portrayed as a rugged, strong-willed stoker who takes pride in his physical power and his role in fueling a transatlantic ocean liner. He believes he is vital to the ship's function and, by extension, to society itself. However, when he encounters Mildred—a wealthy woman from the upper class who is repulsed by his appearance—his self-assurance is shattered, sparking an identity crisis. Yank's search for belonging becomes a reflection of the play's themes of alienation, dehumanization, and class conflict. O'Neill created *The Hairy Ape* to delve into the psychological effects of industrialization and capitalism, particularly on the working class. He sought to illustrate how mechanized society can rob individuals of their sense of self and humanity, leaving them feeling isolated and "caged" within a system that sees them merely as labor tools [4].

The hero of the play, Yank, a stoker on a steamship, feels that he belongs to the powerful world of steam, steel, and iron. However, this belief is shaken when he encounters a fragile, anxious, wealthy woman in the stokehole who faints at the sight of his raw strength and rough appearance. Following this incident, Yank begins to question his place in the world, convinced that the woman referred to him as a "hairy ape." Onshore,

Yank sets out to determine if he truly fits into the modern world. He visits Fifth Avenue with a shipmate, where he observes the idle lifestyles of the wealthy. When he insults some of the affluent people, he is arrested and sent to jail. There, he learns about an organization that opposes the wealthy class. Upon his release, he offers his support to this group, expressing a desire to destroy the steel and capitalist establishments. However, he is quickly rejected and thrown out of the organization's hall. In a final attempt to find his true nature, Yank goes to the zoo and speaks to a gorilla. He frees the gorilla, hoping to join it and find a sense of belonging, but the animal kills him and throws his body into its cage. Yank dies, pondering whether he has finally discovered the place where he truly belongs [5].

Eugene O'Neill believed that the defining characteristic of his time was the disintegration of moral, spiritual, and religious values. As an artist, he grappled with the root causes of this dissolution. In *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill symbolizes the relationship between modern man and the universe, a universe where individuals' desires to "belong" are mere whims of a capricious deterministic force. He centers his narrative on the social outcast, whose bitter struggle against a hostile society reflects humanity's position in an indifferent universe. While *The Hairy Ape* is a social drama, O'Neill suggests that the social issues it presents serve as a gateway to larger existential problems. The dislocation of society is portrayed as a symbol of deeper cosmic dislocation. The central theme of the play is the profound spiritual poverty and disharmony that emerged as a by-product of the industrial age, soon becoming its defining feature. Yank's sense of pride in his labor is built on a fundamentally false understanding of his role in society. In reality, he is merely a mechanical appendage to the furnace he feeds, not the vital force he imagines himself to be. His inflated sense of self is contrasted by his friend Paddy, who reminisces about an era when men belonged to ships and ships were part of the sea, emphasizing the lost connection between man and his work. Yank's myth of being a vital part of progress is shattered when he encounters Mildred Douglas, the neurotic daughter of the capitalist class, who visits the stokehole. Horrified by his appearance and behavior, she refers to him as a "filthy beast" and faints. This violent interaction forces Yank to confront the reality of his situation, revealing that he does not belong as he once believed. The world does not belong to him and his kind, but to those who perceive him as a "hairy ape" [5].

Marxist theory is an economic and social framework that posits that the economic systems shaping human societies are the foundation of human experience. According to Marxism, the drive to gain and maintain economic power underlies all social and political actions, influencing areas such as education, religion, government, and the arts. In this view, the economy forms the base upon which the "superstructure" of society's political, social, and ideological aspects is built. Economic power inherently encompasses both social and political power. From a Marxist viewpoint, differences in socioeconomic class create divisions that are far more significant than those of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. The main conflict, simply put, lies between the "haves" and the "have-nots": between the bourgeoisie—those who control natural, economic, and human resources—and the proletariat, the vast majority who live in poor conditions and perform the manual labor, such as mining, factory work, and construction, that enriches the wealthy. Unfortunately, the proletariat often fails to recognize this division, frequently allowing religious, racial, ethnic, or gender differences to split them into competing factions that achieve minimal social change. Unlike Marx's original belief that the proletariat would eventually gain class consciousness and revolt to create a classless society, few Marxists today think this will happen spontaneously. However, if the proletariat of a nation were to unite—setting aside their differences to vote for the same candidates, boycott certain companies, and strike until their needs were met—the existing power structure would be profoundly transformed [6].

From a Marxist perspective, Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* serves as a powerful critique of American capitalist culture and the ideology that sustains it. The play explores

into the lives of individuals at both extremes of the economic hierarchy, exposing how American ideals not only fail to deliver their promises but also contribute to the erosion of personal values. Through the lens of Marxist theory, the play dissects the socioeconomic system, presenting a sharp critique of capitalism and classism. It highlights the futility and aimlessness of the proletariat's struggle against the dominant classes, illustrating the systemic barriers to meaningful resistance. Symbolically, the work underscores the oppressive and repressive effects of class divisions and capitalist ideology. Additionally, O'Neill critiques the role of organized religion, portraying it as a tool of the bourgeoisie that obscures the recognition of oppressive structures and perpetuates inequality [7].

This study aims to explore the theme of class struggle as portrayed in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* through the lens of Marxist critique. The analysis focuses on the interaction between social classes, highlighting the alienation, exploitation, and ideological manipulation faced by the working class within a capitalist society by posing the following questions:

1. How does the play reflect the relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie?
2. How does the play highlight the loss of belonging of the working class in an industrial society?

2. Literature Review

Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922) is one of the most prominent expressionist plays that explores the economic and social transformations of the early twentieth century. Yank (the Protagonist) is a simple worker who struggles to define his place and identity in a world of increasing class exploitation and human alienation. In his research "Displaying the Human's Struggle Against Oppression: An Examination of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*" Ismael Hasan Obaid Alsanafi (2022) examines how Eugene O'Neill portrays the human struggle against oppression in his play *The Hairy Ape*. It shows how O'Neill uses his characters to embody human suffering and the unjust economic and social conditions in America during the 1920s, focusing on the impact of capitalism and industrialization on humanity. In his research, Ismael explains how Eugene O'Neill was able to highlight the function of drama as a mirror reflecting human suffering and social conditions, and how he used playwriting as a means of exposing social and economic injustice [8].

In her article "From Ape to Man and from Man to Ape" (1957) Margaret Gump 'Gump analyzes O'Neill's play from an evolutionary and social perspective, Gump exploration the idea of the tension between animal and human and the social and psychological transformations that the play's hero. The title of the article reflects the existential tension between man who aspires to achieve something higher and the factors that attract him to his animal origins [9].

In her research "The Identity Crisis in *The Hairy Ape*" Zahraa Adnan Baqer (2012) Deals with the character "Yank", who suffers from an identity crisis after feeling that he does not belong anywhere, whether in his job as a ship worker or in the wider society. The research analyzes Yank's journey in search of belonging, where the writer uses symbols such as steel to represent power and the prison in which Yank feels he is held. She shows how the loss of faith leads to destruction, and shows how modern industrial society has led to the alienation of workers [10].

Many researchers have been able to address the play from different perspectives. However, no one has been able to address the play in relation to the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in detail. Thus, this paper can be considered as a good addition to the general body of research to fill the gap mentioned above.

3. Methodology

Marxism is an economic and social framework that asserts that the economic systems shaping human societies are the foundation of human experience. According to Marxism,

the drive to gain and maintain economic power underlies all social and political actions, influencing areas such as education, religion, government, and arts. In this view, the economy forms the base upon which the "superstructure" of society's political, social, and ideological aspects is built. Economic power inherently encompasses both social and political power. From a Marxist point of view, differences in socioeconomic class create divisions that are far more affective than those of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender [6].

Even in the West, Marxism has become a potent intellectual movement. Marx thought that class conflict constituted the history of society. Society has been split into rival classes ever since the means of production (factories, etc.) were privately owned. It is simple to observe how the dialectical process between the classes translates into economic and social development. Until a new social and economic order—the synthesis—is established, the two opposing classes continue to struggle. Karl Marx assumed that as each stage of economic history reached its climax, the next stage would inevitably emerge, but not without the catalyst of revolution. He identified six stages of economic development. Among these, capitalism was characterized by the bourgeoisie owning the means of production while the proletariat worked for wages [11].

Under the current historical context, it may be more effective to categorize Americans based on their socioeconomic lifestyle, regardless of how their income is acquired. For clarity, the main socioeconomic divisions in contemporary America can be outlined through distinct groups that exhibit stark differences in socioeconomic lifestyles: the homeless, who have few, if any, material possessions and little hope for improvement; the poor, who face limited educational and career opportunities, struggling to support their families and live in fear of becoming homeless; the financially established, who own nice homes and cars and can usually afford to send their children to college; the well-to-do, who can afford multiple expensive homes, several cars, and luxury items; and the extremely wealthy, such as the owners of large, well-established corporations, for whom money (mansions, limousines, personal airplanes, yachts) is no issue. These five groups might be loosely referred to as America's underclass, lower class, middle class, upper class, and "aristocracy" [6].

Clearly, individuals in the underclass and lower class face economic oppression. They endure the hardships of financial deprivation, are most severely affected by economic downturns, and have limited opportunities to improve their situations. In stark contrast, the upper class and "aristocracy" enjoy economic privilege, leading luxurious lifestyles with significant financial security and minimal impact from economic recessions. For the poor and homeless in America today, the struggle to survive is certainly a major factor. When one is preoccupied with staying alive and feeding one's children, there is little time or energy for political activism or even political awareness. Additionally, the police and other government enforcement agencies, acting under government orders, have mistreated the lower-class and underclass poor, further contributing to their oppression. Individuals perceived as threats to the power structure include striking workers, who were often arrested, beaten, or even killed during the early days of American labor unions, and the homeless, who were driven out of their cardboard shelters in New York's Central Park because their presence, in essence, "ruined the view" for the wealthy residents in nearby luxury apartments. However, the poor are more effectively oppressed through ideological means [6].

In Marxist terms, an ideology is a belief system shaped by cultural conditioning. Examples of ideologies include capitalism, communism, Marxism, patriotism, religion, ethical systems, humanism, environmentalism, astrology, and even karate. Our assumption that nature adheres to scientific laws is also an ideology. While almost every experience or field of study contains an ideological component, not all ideologies are equally beneficial or desirable. Repressive ideologies promote political agendas and disguise themselves as natural perspectives rather than acknowledging their ideological

nature. For instance, the sexist ideology that "men are naturally suited for leadership due to their biological superiority" masks itself as a natural truth rather than a cultural belief. Similarly, the capitalist ideology that "every family wants to own its own home" presents itself as a natural desire without recognizing that this desire is instilled by the capitalist culture [6].

Repressive ideologies, by posing as natural perspectives, hinder our understanding of the material and historical conditions that shape our worldview. Marxism, as a non-repressive ideology, openly acknowledges its ideological nature. It strives to make us aware of how material and historical circumstances influence us and how repressive ideologies keep us subservient to the ruling power structures. (Tyson, 2015) The modern world clearly demonstrates that those who control the means of production also wield both political and ideological power. Additionally, the notion of the state as a means of exploiting and oppressing other classes has shown its plausibility. The 20th century validated several of Marx's concepts, demonstrating their practical relevance [12].

3.1. Class Struggle

Class conflicts have been a part of every culture up to this point. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in other words, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another and engaged in an unbroken, now-hidden, now-open struggle that always ended in either the mutual destruction of the opposing classes or a revolutionary reconstitution of society as a whole [13]. Class struggle is a necessary aspect of society. While ordinary people engage in struggles to improve their conditions, economically powerful people engage in struggles to defend their privileges. Thus, class struggle is from below and from above [14].

Class tensions still exist in the contemporary bourgeois society that sprang from the remains of feudal society. It has merely replaced the previous forms of struggle with new ones, new classes, and new oppressive conditions. However, the bourgeoisie era—has one unique characteristic: it has made class conflicts simpler. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the two big classes that are directly facing one another, and society as a whole is increasingly dividing into these two hostile camps. The modern bourgeoisie has evolved through a long history of development and revolutions in production and exchange. With the advent of Modern Industry and the global market, the bourgeoisie has secured exclusive political power in the modern representative state, where the state's executive functions to manage their collective interests. Historically, the bourgeoisie has played a revolutionary role, dismantling feudal, patriarchal, and idyllic relationships. They have replaced these with a society driven by self-interest and monetary transactions. Emotional and spiritual fervor have been supplanted by cold, selfish calculation, reducing personal worth to exchange value [15].

The bourgeoisie has demystified and commodified every previously revered profession, turning doctors, lawyers, priests, poets, and scientists into wage laborers. They have stripped the family of its sentimental aspects, reducing familial relationships to mere monetary transactions. The bourgeoisie thrives on the constant revolution of production methods and, consequently, societal relations. The extensive use of machinery and the division of labor have stripped the work of proletarians of any individual character, industry has transformed the small workshops of patriarchal masters into large factories owned by industrial capitalists. Once the manufacturer's exploitation ends with the laborer receiving wages, the laborer is then exploited by other bourgeois elements like landlords, shopkeepers, and pawnbrokers. The lower middle class, including small tradespeople, shopkeepers, retired tradesmen, handicraftsmen, and peasants, gradually fall into the proletariat. Their small capital cannot compete with large capitalists [15].

The formation of the proletariat into a class, and thus a political party, is repeatedly disrupted by internal competition. However, it consistently resurges stronger. This unity forces legislative recognition of specific worker interests by exploiting divisions within the

bourgeoisie. Class collisions in old society have significantly advanced the development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie is in a constant struggle, initially with the aristocracy, then with segments of itself whose interests conflict with industrial progress, and continuously with foreign bourgeoisies. In these battles, the bourgeoisie must appeal to the proletariat, pulling them into the political arena. Among the classes confronting the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat is the truly revolutionary class. Other classes decay and vanish under modern industry, while the proletariat remains its distinct and essential product [15].

The proletarian movement is a self-aware, independent effort representing the immense majority's interests. As the lowest stratum of society, the proletariat's rise inevitably disrupts the entire official societal structure. Initially, their struggle with the bourgeoisie is national, with each country's proletariat addressing its own bourgeoisie first. The proletariat's development is marked by an ongoing civil war within society, culminating in open revolution and the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, paving the way for proletariat rule. Historically, every society has been based on the conflict between oppressor and oppressed classes. However, unlike past classes that managed to improve their status, modern laborers sink deeper into poverty as industry progresses, highlighting the bourgeoisie's inability to maintain a sustainable ruling class. The bourgeoisie relies on capital formation and wage-labor, which depends on competition among workers. Industrial advancements foster worker unity through association, undermining the bourgeoisie's foundation. Thus, modern industry inadvertently prepares its own downfall, making the bourgeoisie's collapse and the proletariat's victory inevitable [15].

The state serves as a powerful tool for organizing, disrupting, and reorganizing social relations. It can either be a revolutionary force or a tool for stagnation, depending on who controls it. Political parties aim to capture power to align the state with their class interests. The Social Democrats, representing the proletariat, seek working-class political dominance. As capitalism grows, so does the proletariat. However, the transfer of power to the working class depends not just on productive forces but on class struggle dynamics. Workers can come to power in economically backward countries sooner than in advanced ones. For example, in 1871, workers took control in Paris for two months, while in capitalist centers like Britain or the United States, they have never held power. The Russian revolution is expected to create conditions for workers to gain power before bourgeois liberal politicians can fully demonstrate their governing abilities [16].

The number, concentration, culture, and political significance of the industrial proletariat are influenced by the development of capitalist industry, but this relationship is indirect. Various social and political factors at national and international levels can alter the political expression of economic relations. For instance, despite the United States' productive forces being ten times greater than Russia's, the Russian proletariat has a much more significant political role and influence both domestically and globally. Karl Kautsky, in his book on the American proletariat, states there is no direct link between the political power of the proletariat and bourgeoisie and the level of capitalist development. He contrasts two states: in America, the capitalist class is disproportionately developed, while in Russia, it is the proletariat. America exemplifies the dictatorship of capital, whereas Russia showcases the rising importance of the militant proletariat, whose role is expected to grow. Germany might learn from Russia's example, as the Russian proletariat demonstrates the future not through capital development, but through working-class protest [16].

3.2. Ideology

Nobody has yet been able to establish a single, universally accepted definition of ideology. This is not due to a lack of intelligence among those working in the field but rather because the term "ideology" encompasses a wide range of useful meanings, many of which are not entirely compatible with one another. so, there's some definitions of

ideology in circulation include: false ideas that serve to legitimize dominant political power; forms of thought driven by social interests [17]. An ideology is essentially a belief system, and every belief system is shaped by cultural influences. Even the belief that nature operates according to scientific laws is, in itself, an ideology. However, not all ideologies are equally beneficial or desirable. Harmful ideologies often serve repressive political agendas and, to secure public acceptance, present themselves as natural perspectives rather than openly identifying as ideologies [6].

To Marxism, the base refers to the economic system that serves as the foundation upon which the superstructure is built. Cultural activities, such as philosophy and literature, are considered part of the superstructure. According to Marx, the superstructure is shaped by the base and, as a result, reflects and reinforces the ideologies of the base. These ideologies consist of the evolving ideas, values, and emotions through which individuals perceive their societies. By presenting the dominant ideas and values as those of the entire society, ideologies obscure the true workings of society, preventing individuals from understanding its actual structure and dynamics [18]. Repressive ideologies, by presenting themselves as natural perspectives, obscure an understanding of the material and historical conditions shaping society. They deny any connection between these conditions and perceptions of the world, thus reinforcing their influence. In contrast, an ideology that acknowledges its own existence seeks to reveal the ways individuals are shaped by material and historical circumstances. It aims to expose the repressive ideologies that obscure this reality, maintaining subservience to dominant power structures [6].

Marx held that all systems of thought, or ideologies, are shaped by social and economic realities. Human history is defined by the struggle between social classes, where the culture, or superstructure, of a society reflects the interests and expressions of the dominant class. Leitch explains that, in Marxism, "consists of the ideas, beliefs, forms, and values of the ruling class that circulate through all the cultural spheres" [18]. He further argues that culture and the arts are neither innocent forms of entertainment nor independent of social forces, as they play a crucial role in transmitting ideology. If the term ideology is restricted to dominant forms of social thought, this approach would be both inaccurate and unnecessarily confusing. Instead, it may be more appropriate to adopt a broader definition of ideology as any interaction between belief systems and political power. Such a definition would remain neutral regarding whether this interaction reinforces or challenges a specific social order. Political philosopher Martin Seliger advocates for this perspective, defining ideology as "sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order" [17].

In other words, the term ideology seems to refer not only to belief systems but also to issues of power. One of the most common interpretations is that ideology serves to legitimize the power of a dominant social group or class. As John B. Thompson writes, "To study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination." [17]. This is arguably the most widely accepted definition of ideology. The process of legitimation can involve at least six different strategies: a dominant power may legitimize itself by promoting beliefs and values that align with its interests; naturalizing and universalizing these beliefs so they appear self-evident and inevitable; discrediting ideas that could challenge it; excluding competing forms of thought, often through an unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social realities in ways that benefit itself. This process of "mystification" typically involves masking or suppressing social conflicts, leading to the idea of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions within any given ideological formation [17].

Ideology plays a crucial role in sustaining the power of the ruling class. Classism, for instance, is an ideology that associates a person's worth with their social class: the higher the class, the greater the perceived value of the individual. This belief assumes that qualities like intelligence, responsibility, trustworthiness, and ethics are inherent to those in higher social classes, as if such traits are "in the blood." Consequently, individuals at the top of the social hierarchy are seen as naturally superior, while those at the bottom are stereotyped as lazy, irresponsible, and unmotivated. This perspective justifies the concentration of power and leadership within the upper class, portraying them as uniquely capable of fulfilling such roles. In doing so, classism perpetuates systemic social, economic, and political discrimination against the poor [6]. For Marx, "ideology critique" involves revealing how class interests function within various cultural forms, such as politics, law, religion, philosophy, education, and literature. Marx argues that ideology seeks to obscure the reality of class struggle from people awareness and understanding. Furthermore, when working-class individuals unconsciously adopt bourgeois values, they unknowingly become carriers of what he refers to as "false consciousness" [18].

The concept of ideology has been a central focus for many Marxist critics, particularly the French theorist Louis Althusser (1918–1990). Althusser is renowned for his anti-humanist approach to Marxism. In his 1964 essay "Marxism and Humanism," he rejects concepts like "human potential" and "species-being," which are often advocated by Marxists, viewing them as products of a bourgeois ideology of "humanity." Vincent Leitch asserts that "Althusser's interventions changed the face of Western Marxist theory, shattering the pieties of Stalinist dogmatism and the newer Marxist humanism" [18]. Rather than focusing on humanism, which highlights human freedom and self-determination, Althusser prioritizes the scientific dimensions of Marxism, particularly its analysis of how societal structures shape lived experiences [18].

In his highly influential essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), Louis Althusser examines how social systems maintain control by shaping individuals through ideology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the base and superstructure. He argues that people desires, choices, intentions, preferences, and judgments are products of social practices, making it essential to understand how society molds individuals in its own image. Like Marx, Althusser believes that ideological practices instill values in individuals, thus shaping them into subjects. He contends that in capitalist societies, individuals perceive themselves as conscious, responsible agents. However, this perception is not innate but rather acquired or imposed through established social structures and practices. To illustrate this point, Althusser explains how capitalism perpetuates the labor force it requires, not only through wages but also through external mechanisms, such as the capitalist education system and other institutions [18].

3.3. Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA)

Louis Althusser, a prominent Structuralist Marxist philosopher in 1960s France, authored influential works such as *For Marx* (1965) and *Lenin and Philosophy* (1971). In his renowned 1968 essay, he redefines the concept of ideology. Traditionally understood as a form of "false consciousness," Althusser presents ideology as a system of practices and institutions that uphold an individual's imaginary connection to their material conditions of existence. When discussing ideological State apparatuses and their practices, mentioned that each one embodies an ideology (with the unity of these various regional ideologies religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc.—being maintained through their subordination to the dominant ideology). Returning to this idea, an ideology is always rooted in an apparatus and its corresponding practice. This existence is fundamentally material [19].

In the 1970s, Althusser continued the theoretical revisions he had begun in 1967, further developing underexplored Marxist ideas. Among the most notable outcomes of this work is his concept of "ideological interpellation," presented in the essay "Ideology

and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970). This essay, an excerpt from his larger work "On the Reproduction of Capitalism," examines the necessary relationship between the state and its subjects to sustain a given economic mode of production. Althusser's analysis extends beyond the state's legal and educational systems to explore the psychological connection between individuals and the state, mediated through ideology. This theory of subject formation serves to support Althusser's argument that states maintain power by reproducing subjects who perceive their social roles as natural and inevitable [19].

Marx conceptualized the structure of every society as comprising distinct "levels" or "instances," organized through a specific form of determination. At the foundation lies the infrastructure, or economic base, which represents the "unity" of the productive forces and the relations of production. Above this base is the superstructure, which consists of two key levels: the politico-legal level, encompassing law and the State, and the ideological level, which includes various ideologies such as religion, ethics, law, and politics. In both *The Communist Manifesto* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, the State is conceptualized as a repressive apparatus. It is described as a "machine" of repression that enables the ruling classes namely, the bourgeoisie and the large landowners of the 19th century to maintain their dominance over the working class. This dominance facilitates the extraction of surplus value, a cornerstone of capitalist exploitation. The State apparatus, in this context, is defined as an instrument of repressive action and intervention, operating fundamentally to serve the interests of the ruling classes in their class struggle against the proletariat. This repressive function is central to the State's role and essence [20].

The characterization of the State as a class-based entity, embodied in its repressive apparatus, provides a profound explanation for the various manifestations of repression across different domains. This perspective sheds light on historical events such as the massacres of June 1848, the Paris Commune, Bloody Sunday in Petrograd in 1905, as well as the atrocities of the Resistance and Charonne. It also elucidates seemingly minor acts of repression, such as the censorship of Diderot's *La Religieuse* or a play by Gatti on Franco. The political class struggle revolves entirely around the State, specifically the acquisition, retention, or consolidation of State power by a particular class or an alliance of classes or class fractions. This requires a distinction between State power, which is the objective of the political class struggle, and the State apparatus [20].

Historical examples show that the State apparatus can survive even when State power shifts. Bourgeois revolutions in 19th-century France, coups d'état, or the collapse of regimes, such as the fall of the Empire in 1870 or the Third Republic in 1940, did not fundamentally alter or dismantle the State apparatus. Similarly, after the 1917 social revolution, much of the State apparatus remained intact despite the seizure of State power by the proletariat and small peasantry. In Marxist theory, the State is understood as a repressive apparatus. State power and the State apparatus must be differentiated. The political class struggle focuses on controlling State power, and the ruling classes use the State apparatus to serve their class interests. For the proletariat to achieve emancipation, it must seize State power, dismantle the bourgeois State apparatus, and replace it with a proletarian State apparatus as a transitional phase. Over time, this should lead to the abolition of the State altogether, ending both State power and the State apparatus [20].

Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) must not be confused with the (repressive) State Apparatus. The State Apparatus includes institutions such as the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, and Prisons. These are collectively referred to as the Repressive State Apparatus, which operates primarily through violence though repression may also take non-physical forms, such as administrative actions. In contrast, ISAs function through ideology rather than direct coercion. They include various institutions such as the religious ISA, represented by the system of different Churches; the educational ISA, encompassing both public and private schools; the family ISA; the legal ISA; the political ISA, which includes the political system and different Parties; the trade-

union ISA; the communications ISA, including the press, radio, and television; and the cultural ISA, which covers literature, the arts, sports, and similar domains. These institutions collectively work to perpetuate the dominant ideology and maintain the existing social order. The key distinction between the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and the Repressive State Apparatus lies in their fundamental mode of operation. The Repressive State Apparatus primarily functions through violence, while the Ideological State Apparatuses operate through ideology [20].

Every State Apparatus, whether Repressive or Ideological, operates through both violence and ideology, but with a crucial distinction that prevents confusing the two. The Repressive State Apparatus primarily operates through repression (including physical repression) and secondarily through ideology. There is no purely repressive apparatus. For example, the Army and Police, while engaging in violent actions, also rely on ideology to maintain internal cohesion and to promote certain values externally [20].

On the other hand, Ideological State Apparatuses primarily function through ideology, but they also use repression, albeit in a more subtle and concealed way, often symbolic and attenuated. There is no purely ideological apparatus. For instance, Schools and Churches employ various methods of punishment, expulsion, and selection to discipline both their leaders and their followers. The same applies to the Family and the cultural ISAs, which may use censorship and other forms of repression. Given that the ruling class holds State power, either openly or through alliances with other classes or fractions, it is not surprising that this class also plays a dominant role in the Ideological State Apparatuses. Ultimately, it is the ruling ideology that prevails in these apparatuses, even as it manifests through contradictions [20].

Everyone is aware that the Ideological State Apparatuses may be the focus of class conflict, frequently in its most acrimonious manifestations, in addition to being the stake. Because the former ruling classes are able to maintain strong positions there for an extended period of time and because the oppressed classes are able to find ways to express themselves there, either by using their contradictions or by gaining combat positions in them during struggle, the class (or class alliance) in power finds it more difficult to impose laws in the ISAs than it does in the (repressive) State apparatus [20].

4. Analysis

Portraying the issue of class conflict Eugene O'Neil's play *The Hairy Ape* can be regarded a good sample for analysis containing many of what was mentioned above "O'Neill believed he had an important idea to propound in *The Hairy Ape*, and the idea was charged with his very personal sense of man's alienation in the modern world. The subject here is the ancient one that always was and always will be the one subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his own fate [21].

Yank, a muscular ship engine room worker who takes pride in his power and views himself as a vital component of the industrial machine, is the subject of *The Hairy Ape*. When Mildred, the daughter of a wealthy businessman, denounces him and refers to him as a "hairy ape," he begins to see the stark differences between the classes, which alters his image of himself. Yank tries to fit in, but both the organized working class and the bourgeoisie turn him away. A gorilla at the zoo ultimately kills him, signifying his loss and social alienation. By showing how industrial capitalism alienates the working class and crushes their humanity. The first scene shows a conversation between Yank and Buddy. Yank rejects Paddy's idea, that they are all the slaves of the capitalist class. He believes that they are the real power of the industrialized world. Without them, the labow-en, not a single machine will work. The rich do not do the real physical work, therefore the capitalist class do not belong to the industrial world, but Yank and his friends do.

YANK. Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere

ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves! It--dat's me! [22].

Despite being exploited by the capitalist system, Yank believes he is the driving force of the industrial world because of the ideology of the proletariat, which makes him accept his position in the class structure without really resisting it. His sense of power is merely an illusion created by capitalist discourse [17]. With the beginning of the third act, someone disrupts the stokers' work by blowing whistles. Yank is upset by this behavior and gives the instruction to stop making that noise. Mildred enters, accompanied by the engineers, as the workers turn away to toss the coal into the furnaces. When the whistle blows once more, Yank looks up and yells while hammering his filthy chest in a gorilla manner. The witnessed sight she has overwhelms Mildred, who, just before passing out, refers to Yank as a "filthy beast." Mildred's yelling infuriates and offends Yank. In this scene, Yank, the powerful, soot-covered worker, shocks Mildred, who stands in for the bourgeois nature. She expresses her contempt for Yank by calling him a nasty creature, citing both his appearance and the stark class divide between them [22].

MILDRED--[About to faint--to the Engineers, who now have her one by each arm--whimperingly.] Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast! [She faints. They carry her quickly back, disappearing in the darkness at the left, rear [17].

Yank's sense of powerlessness is conveyed in this scene. Despite his physical strength, he cannot break through the social hurdles that keep him from being a member of the bourgeois class. As Yank starts to understand his role in society, this moment marks a turning point in the play. The stark contrast between the privileged and the impoverished is reflected in Mildred's perception of Yank as a monster rather than a person. The way that ideology affects how different socioeconomic classes view one another is reflected in Mildred's remark. Mildred is a product of the bourgeois ideology, which views the working class as inferior and inhuman, rather than merely a person voicing her own views. [17].

Moving to the fourth act, Long is a worker who works with Yank in the engine room of the ship discloses Mildred's background, stating that her father is a billionaire who owns the ship and is responsible for producing half of the world's steel. He perceives all individuals on the ship, including workers, captains, and engineers, as mere slaves to this big capitalist system. Mildred is not just the capitalist's daughter, but also a representation of his influence. When Long reveals that Mildred came solely to observe "the animals," the workers react with intense anger, reflecting their increasing awareness of their exploitation. This moment highlights the underlying resentment of the working class towards the ruling class, who regard them as nothing more than instruments of production [18].

LONG--[Jumping on a bench--hecticly] Hinsultin' us! Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And them bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibitin' us 's if we was bleedin' monkeys in a menagerie? Did we sign for hinsults to our dignity as 'onest workers? Is that in the ship's articles? You kin bloody well bet it ain't! But I knows why they done it. I asked a deck steward 'o she was and 'e told me. 'Er old man's a bleedin' millionaire, a bloody Capitalist! 'E's got enuf bloody gold to sink this bleedin' ship! 'E makes arf the bloody steel in the world! 'E owns this bloody boat! And you and me, comrades, we're 'is slaves! And the skipper and mates and engineers, they're 'is slaves! And she's 'is bloody daughter and we're all 'er slaves, too! And she gives 'er orders as 'ow she wants to see the bloody animals below decks and down they takes 'er! [There is a roar of rage from all sides] [22].

Since Long has learned that Mildred's father is a capitalist who treats workers like them as animals, he views the interaction as illustrative of the conflict between socioeconomic classes [23]. This sample illustrates the class conflict central to *The Hairy Ape*, where O'Neill depicts workers as marginalized individuals within the capitalist framework, emphasizing their feelings of alienation and subjugation. Unlike Yank, Long

is more aware of class issues and understands that workers are exploited by the capitalist class rather than being merely instruments that move the world. The bourgeois ideology that presents the class structure as normal or right is contested in his speech. He reveals the fallacy of the ideology that defends class privilege by pointing out that Mildred is a representative of her entire class and not simply an individual. As a daughter of "capital," she is superior to them because of the economic system rather than because of her own merits. [14].

In the Below passage, Paddy, one of the workers, expresses his bitterness and sarcasm. He highlights how Meledred stands behind the workers, while the second officer speaks of them as if they were circus animals. He employs a striking metaphor, likening them to "a strange kind of monkey" never seen even in "dark Africa," which reflects a dual contempt for the workers, depicting them as primitive and subhuman. Paddy emphasizes that the workers endure grueling conditions, being "roasted in their own sweat," a phrase illustrating the arduous labor they face in the sweltering engine rooms.

PADDY--[Continuing the trend of his thoughts as if he had never been interrupted--bitterly.] And there she was standing behind us, and the Second pointing at us like a man you'd hear in a circus would be saying: In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy. We roast them in their own sweat--and be damned if you won't hear some of thim saying they like it! [He glances scornfully at Yank] [22].

Paddy embodies the older generation of laborers; he is an older Irish sailor who critiques capitalism yet yearns for reform. In contrast, Yank views himself as a vital component of the system rather than a victim, leading to a clash between differing perspectives on the working class and its hardships. Unlike Long and Yank, Buddy's speech exhibits a different sense of class consciousness. He is not deluded by the working class's fictitious power, which sets him apart from both Yank and Long. Instead, he conveys a deep sense of alienation by comparing workers to animals on exhibit at a capitalist circus. This metaphor emphasizes how ideology dehumanizes workers, leading them to accept and sometimes even unwittingly relish their exploitation. When Buddy remarks that some workers "may say they like it," he is alluding to the way the ideological state machinery instills concepts that force workers to accept their harsh conditions without protesting, which is one of the primary purposes of capitalist ideology. Yank is the living example of this ideology, seeing himself not as a victim but as the real mover of the World. At the end of the fourth scene Buddy using sharp sarcasm regarding Mildred's response to seeing Yank. His exclamation, "No doubt about it!" enhances the irony, as he ridicules the notion that Mildred could have romantic feelings for Yank, despite her actual feelings of disgust and fear. He illustrates how Mildred goes pale and shrinks away, shielding her eyes with her hands to avoid seeing Yank. Her behavior illustrates her disdain and her struggle to grasp the existence of someone like Yank in her life, highlighting the significant class divide between them [17], [20].

PADDY--[With heavy, biting sarcasm.] 'Twas love at first sight, divil a doubt of it! If you'd seen the endearin' look on her pale mug when she shrivelled away with her hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of him! Sure, 'twas as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!. [22].

With his scathing irony, Paddy exposes how bourgeois ideology shapes the upper class's perception of workers. By comparing Mildred's response to seeing "a big hairy ape escaped from the zoo," Paddy highlights how ideology produces stereotypes of the working class as primitive, uncivilized, and inferior to "civilized" humans. Paddy acknowledges injustice but sees no way to change it, illustrating how ideology can make even workers feel powerless and passively accept their position in the social order. At the beginning of the fifth scene, Long and Yank go to Fifth Avenue so that Yank can see how people like Mildred live. In this scene, Long is shown attempting to persuade Yank that the bourgeoisie as a whole, not simply Mildred, should be the target of his ire. Long aims

to "awaken his class consciousness" as workers come to understand that the capitalism system as a whole, not just wealthy people, is the source of their issues [17].

LONG--[As disgusted as he dares to be.] Ain't that why I brought yer up 'ere--to show yer? Yer been lookin' at this 'ere 'ole affair wrong. Yer been actin' an' talkin' 's if it was all a bleedin' personal matter between yer and that bloody cow. I wants to convince yer she was on'y a representative of 'er class. I wants to awaken yer bloody class consciousness. Then yer'll see it's 'er class yer've got to fight, not 'er alone. There's a 'ole mob of 'em like 'er, Gawd blind 'em! [22].

Long discusses class consciousness in detail, a topic that bourgeois ideology tries to obfuscate. Long makes an effort to make Yank understand that the class Mildred represents is the issue, not Mildred herself. Instead of seeing their exploitation as a relationship of oppression and systematic exploitation at the level of the social structure, Bourgeois ideology causes workers to view it as something natural or personal (individual antagonism). In order to help Yank see the class dimension of the struggle, Long aims to free him from the delusion that caused him to perceive the issue as an individual one. Long is the play's voice of resistance, working to show the workers that exploitation is an integrated ideological and authoritarian system rather than a human problem. [16].

In this text Yank appears as being extremely angry and violent, bursting against the upper classes and systems that he is unable to comprehend or control. Yank starts to lash out at Meledred, referring to her racism and classism by using the phrase "under the white gaze" repeatedly. Then, as if seeking a release for his bottled-up energy, Yank turns violent, attempting to pull a lamppost or the sidewalk edge to use as a stick to strike anything. A large man in a towering hat is seen hurrying to the bus, and Yank approaches him and runs into him. But as the man bumps against Yank, he loses his balance. Yank assaults the man, thinking he has discovered a cause of contention, but is let down when he finds the man completely unconcerned and goes on with his life as if nothing had occurred. Yank was expecting a violent reaction, but the man and the cops show him little concern, which makes him feel even more powerless and despises the class that lives in a different reality. When the police show up, Yank is subjected to severe abuse, including being tied up and struck with batons. Despite his self-defense efforts. This demonstrates the division of classes, as the men in positions of power mercilessly govern the laborers [20].

YANK--[With a jerk of his head back on his shoulders, as if he had received a punch full in the face--raging.] I see yuh, all in white! I see yuh, yuh white-faced tart, yuh! Hairy ape, huh? I'll hairy ape yuh! [He bends down and grips at the street curbing as if to pluck it out and hurl it. Foiled in this, snarling with passion, he leaps to the lamp-post on the corner and tries to pull it up for a club. Just at that moment a bus is heard rumbling up. A fat, high-hatted, spatted gentleman runs out from the side street. He calls out plaintively: "Bus! Bus! Stop there!" and runs full tilt into the bending, straining YANK, who is bowled off his balance] [14], [16], [17], [20].

YANK--[Seeing a fight--with a roar of joy as he springs to his feet.] At last! Bus, huh? I'll bust yuh! [He lets drive a terrific swing, his fist landing full on the fat gentleman's face. But the gentleman stands unmoved as if nothing had happened] [22].

GENTLEMAN--I beg your pardon. [Then irritably.] You have made me lose my bus. [He claps his hands and begins to scream:] Officer! Officer! [Many police whistles shrill out on the instant and a whole platoon of policemen rush in on YANK from all sides. He tries to fight but is clubbed to the pavement and fallen upon. The crowd at the window have not moved or noticed this disturbance. The clanging gong of the patrol wagon approaches with a clamoring din] [22].

The "gentleman" first emerges as a symbol of the upper class's worldview before the cops show up. People like Yank feel inferior to this man because of his sophisticated appearance (hat, sleeper, bourgeois demeanor). The fact that Yank punches him and doesn't back down represents the bourgeois class system's unwavering dominance in spite

of the working class's "physical force." The police are swiftly and heavily called in after Yank "assaults" the bourgeois man ("A whole regiment of police attacks him from all sides"). This swift, oppressive action shows that the capitalist system uses both physical force and ideology to maintain the working class. This disruption was unnoticed by the crowd at the window. The success of the ideological state apparatuses in establishing an unconscious and alienated society is reflected in this widespread apathy, which symbolizes the impact of ideology on society as a whole and leads everyone to accept violence and repression against the working class as "normal." At the play's climax, Yank's class consciousness clashes with the oppressive system in this scene. It is a devastating revelation of his actual position in capitalist society, where oppression and dogma combine to keep him "in his cage" — as a worker who is not permitted to question the system or leave his class. Thus, the narrative illustrates how class dominance involves not just ideologies but also physical oppression and violence [24]. In the sixth scene of the play *The Hairy Ape*, after the policemen catch Yank and put him in jail. The line "starting up suddenly as if waking from a dream" is used by O'Neill to describe Yank's unexpected realization. Yank has always identified with steel because he sees it as a symbol of his strength, his hard work, and his working-class identity. However, he now views steel as the chains that hold him captive rather than as a tool of power.

YANK--[Suddenly starting as if awakening from a dream, reaches out and shakes the bars--aloud to himself, wonderingly.] Steel. Dis is de Zoo, huh? [A burst of hard, barking laughter comes from the unseen occupants of the cells, runs back down the tier, and abruptly ceases] [22].

The eighth and final scene 'throughout the city. It was twilight the following day. Yank visits the zoo's monkey house and observes a caged gorilla. He respects its force and raw might. After attempting to speak with it, he chooses to release the gorilla. He yanks the cage door open and pulls a bar out from under his coat. Yank tries to shake hands with the gorilla when it's free, but the gorilla gets angry and slams him with its strong grasp. After that, it scoops Yank up from his crushed body, puts him in the cage, and vanishes. Yank, who is dying, discovers that even the gorilla does not want him as a buddy after the gorilla departs. Then he passes away in the cage [23].

YANK--[With a hard, bitter laugh.]"Say, how d'yuh feel sittin' in dat pen all de time, havin' to stand for 'em comin' and starin' at yuh—de white-faced, skinny tarts and de boobs what marry 'em—makin' fun of yuh, laughin' at yuh, gittin' scared of yuh—damn 'em!" [22].

Here, Yank compares himself to a gorilla, a caged animal despised by the affluent. Yank's portrayal of himself as a prisoner "in a cage" also highlights the real tyranny that the workers endure at the hands of the class structure. Additionally, it is a form of symbolic moral oppression that reduces the worker to the status of an animal in a zoo, a creature without autonomy or dignity. Because they are viewed as less than human beings who are used and hated, the working class feels a great sense of alienation. He observes that the wealthy pay little attention to the plight of the poor, viewing them as though they were in a cage. Yank's description of the wealthy as "skinny white faces" highlights the contrast between their environment and that of diligent workers. He claims that they make fun of or intimidate the employees, but ultimately, they rely on their labor without showing gratitude. He ultimately concludes that the wealthy will never let him fit in, either with the revolutionary workers or even with their society. This text eloquently encapsulates how class conflict encompasses more than simply economic exploitation; it also involves psychological and social exclusion, with workers being shut out of society in the same way that animals are kept in cages [13], [17], [20], [24].

5. Conclusion

Eugene O'Neill, one of the most influential American playwrights of the 20th century, used his turbulent upbringing and deep personal struggles to shape his dramatic

works, often exploring themes of alienation, class conflict, and the search for identity. Influenced by his Irish heritage, his father's theatrical career, and the shifting social and political landscape, O'Neill's plays reflect his internal conflicts, particularly regarding religion, suffering, and the human condition. His 1922 play *The Hairy Ape* critiques modern capitalism and industrialization through the story of Yank, a stoker who takes pride in his physical power but faces an identity crisis after being called a "filthy beast" by a wealthy woman. As Yank struggles to find belonging, he encounters rejection from both the upper class and the working-class revolutionaries, ultimately realizing his isolation in society. His tragic fate—being killed by a gorilla—symbolizes the dehumanization and alienation caused by industrialized society.

Marxism is an economic and social framework that views economic systems as the foundation of human experience, shaping all aspects of society, including politics, education, and culture. According to Marx, class struggle between the bourgeoisie (owners of production) and the proletariat (working class) results in historical development. Capitalism, characterized by private ownership and wage labor, creates socioeconomic divisions, leading to oppression of the lower classes. Marx predicted that capitalism's contradictions would lead to revolution and the rise of a classless society. Ideology, in Marxist terms, is a belief system that often serves to legitimize the power of the ruling class by masking social inequalities. Repressive ideologies present themselves as natural truths, while Marxism seeks to expose these illusions and highlight the material conditions shaping society. Class struggle remains central to Marxist analysis, with the proletariat seen as the revolutionary force capable of overthrowing capitalist systems and establishing a new social order.

Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* vividly portrays class conflict and alienation within a capitalist system, focusing on Yank, a ship worker who initially takes pride in his physical strength and role in the industrial world. However, his encounter with Mildred, a wealthy woman who calls him a "hairy ape," shatters his self-perception, exposing the stark class division. Yank's journey reflects the dehumanization and exploitation of the working class, as he struggles to find belonging in a society dominated by bourgeois ideology. The play criticizes capitalism's oppressive structures, showing how workers like Yank are reduced to mere cogs in the machine, alienated from both the upper class and their own humanity. Through Yank's tragic fate—dying in a cage after being rejected even by a gorilla—O'Neill underscores the psychological and social exclusion faced by the proletariat, highlighting the deep-rooted inequalities and ideological control perpetuated by the capitalist system. The play serves as a powerful Marxist critique of class struggle, illustrating how economic exploitation is intertwined with social and psychological oppression.

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