

Themes 1– The search For Identity in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* Eugene O'Neill's real concern was the oppressed industrial working class and the effect of capitalists on worker. This last scene is a terrifying and universal picture of man's agonized soul since, as Dr. Tilak puts it; "Yank's sense of alienation and his quest for identity results in spiritual disintegration and death. His suffering is symbolic of the suffering of many an alienated soul in the contemporary world." To intensify class discrimination in the play, O'Neill describes the social environment of the Fifth Avenue as quite an unfit place for Yank: "A general atmosphere of clean, well-tidied, wide street; a flood of mellow, tempered sunshine; gentle genteel breezes." This setting is contrasted with Yank who is described by O'Neill as holding the same appearance of the stokehole; Yank is in his dirty dungarees. A fireman's cap with black peak is cocked defiantly on the side of his head. He has not shaved for days and around his... eyes the black smudge of coal dust still sticks like make-up. Such a contrast establishes a further conflict within Yank as he walks unseen by people in the Fifth Avenue street. To help his audience prob into Yank's mind, O'Neill tends to employ monologue as an expressionistic technique. Yank is now pulled apart from his natural surroundings and his inner conflict starts to increase. Yank is imprisoned because he offends one of the rich people in the Fifth Avenue. The prison is given a description similar to that of the stokehole in the ship which is just like an animal cage, dimly lit and it is surrounded by heavy steel bars: "one electric bulb from low ceiling of the narrow corridor sheds its light through the heavy steel bars of the cell at the extreme front." "I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere." Mildred intends to discover the life of the sailors in the stokehole, on the other half of ship. The visual and audible aspect used by O'Neill when presenting the fireman are described as chained gorillas: A line of men, stripped to the waist, is before the furnace door. They bend over, looking neither to right nor left..., handling their shovels as if they were part of their bodies, with a strange awkward, swinging rhythm...outlined in silhouette in the crouching inhuman attitudes of chained gorillas. These men lost their identity in a physical work that make theme inferior to human beings and start taking the shape of apes in body and gestures. Mildred is horrified to witness such a scene when Yank. embodies the perfect picture of an ape in a rage;" he [Yank] brandishes his shovel murderously over his head in one hand, pounding on his chest, gorilla-like." "He hopes to find " a creature with whom he is in harmony, that there, at least, he will 'belong'." Through Yank's monologue, we understand that he remains encaged within the person of his soul. He feels worse than the ape in the cage. He does not belong to his surrounding, he has no memories to comfort him and the future is not promising. He addresses the gorilla in the cage as he says: It's dis way, what I'm drivin' at. Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods de jungle and de rest of it. Den yue belong and dey don't.... But me. I ain't got no past to tink in, nor nothing dat's coming, ony what's now... and dat don't belong. Thus, in his attempt to befriend the animal group, Yank frees the gorilla from its cage. Yet dies as the gorilla" wraps his huge arms around Yank in a murderous hug," Leaving his body, afterwards slips on the floor. Yank, the main character in *The Hairy Ape*, is a symbolic representation of man who is alienated from the modern world He believes that he "belongs" to the industrial world through his physical strength, yet he is, gradually, transformed into an ape-like creature. He and the fireman in the forecastle of the ship are described by O'Neill as "beasts cage"; The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing– a confused inchoate uproar swelling into a sort

of unity, a meaning – the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage. Yank feels happy while reading about The World American Labour Union in an "anarchist" paper in the prison. Still, he discovers that this union will present to him a false deceptive security since it seeks to have the right in a legal and peaceful way. As for Yank, he desires to have revenge by using dynamite to blow the steel factory of Mildred's father. He soon realizes the bitter fact that he is alone and steel does not give him power, rather, it is a cage wherein he is locked. His free-will is just an illusion and he is unable to determine his own destiny. He wonders; "where do I go from here?" In conclusion, the need to "belong" in Yank's world has lost its significance and vitality. It is an age of steel and materialism, not an age of free man who can be in harmony with his natural surroundings. Industrialism deprives the working class their spiritual values and humanity. Thus, the play is "a satire on the vacuous world of the rich, and the soulless existence of the poor." Yank is unconscious of the bestial and inhumane treatment to which the stokers are subjected. Yet the appearance of Mildred, the daughter of the owner of "Nazareth" steel, in the stokehole changes Yank. He criticized the capitalist system, and attacked the movement that should stand by the workers, fulfill their needs and solve their problem.