

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WORK OF ZAPF TO HEGELIAN DIALECTICS ON O'NEILL

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Abstract

Yank is stung by Paddy's descriptions of how Mildred looked at him. In an odd mixture of "thought-punches," Yank vows to "brain her! I'll brain her yet, wait 'n' see!" Yank threatens to kill her by a blow he head, the word choice is revealing about his character. The word "brain" can refer to the physical organ, a very smart person or killing by smashing one's skull. Yank wants to take aim at what makes Mildred smarter and superior to him—to "brain" as in to hit and also to "brain" as to be smarter than Mildred.

Unable to physically "get even" with Mildred, Yank resorts to the adolescent tactic of "belonging"—insisting that Mildred does not "belong." Mildred is inferior to the likes of Yank because he "moves," helps run the ship engine, and she's "dead." Yank reduces Mildred to "baggage" that he physically carries. Because Mildred has no physical function, because she does not help to propel the ship, she is lesser.

In Scene Five, Long attempts to teach Yank a lesson. According to Peter Egri, Long means to demonstrate that "Yank's individual [humiliation from Mildred] is part of a general pattern."

Acting as the voice of Marxism, Long has cleanly divided Mildred and Yank into the proletariat and the bourgeois classes. The proletariat is the lower, working class and the bourgeois is considered the upper, aristocratic class. Yank is a Marxist student. Although he does not recognize the proper class names (bourgeois and proletariat) or know the philosophy, he embodies the spirit of Marxism. Marxism predicts that the lower classes, the workers will rise and take over the Bourgeois in a great revolution. Yank attempts to start this revolution on his own. On 5th Avenue he attempts to disrupt and bother "her [Mildred's] kind."

Key words: *smashing, threatens, adolescent, physical function*

INTRODUCTION

In Scene One Yank is described as the fireman's most "highly evolved individual." However, Yank's inability to deal with Mildred reveals Yank has evolved only to specifically survive the rigors of the Ocean Liner and industrial work—not to process complex, cerebral issues. The men kid and taunt Yank, repeatedly recalling the scene of Yank turning to see the ghostly Mildred. Paddy recalls Mildred's reaction, "She [Mildred] shriveled away with her hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of him 'twas as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!"

Long does, however, give Yank the needed encouragement to start his rampage. When the men first arrive at 5th Avenue, Yank wants to leave. He tells Long it is "too clean and quiet and dolled-up" and gives him pain. Long reminds Yank that they came to get back at Mildred. He also informs Yank that everyone he will see on 5th Avenue is just like Mildred, effectually giving Yank a bigger target. Yank tells Long to "bring on de gang!" A Marxist is made.

Yank's fails to impose himself on the Bourgeois he encounters on the street. He cannot attract attention to himself even by forcefully bumping into people, accosting a lady or screaming out, "Bums! Pigs! Tarts! Bitches!" The person that finally takes notice of Yank is a Gentleman that Yank causes to lose his bus. The Gentleman only calls the police because Yank interfered with his bus schedule. The Proletariat's helplessness is only equaled by the Bourgeois' egocentrism. The men and women of 5th Avenue are, indeed, like Mildred. They are described as "a procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankenstein in their detached, mechanical unawareness." The people on Fifth Avenue are detached from all things natural and have become artificial, solely concerned with themselves. O'Neil has suggested that human faces might even be obscured in this scene with masks, saying that "From the opening of the fourth scene, where Yank begins to think he enters into a masked world, even the familiar faces of his mates in the forecastle have become strange and alien. They should be masked, and the faces of everyone he encounters thereafter, including the symbolic gorilla's."

Review of literature

Yank is awakened to the sameness and great generality of members belonging to a like social class. In Scene Four, Yank begins to recognize the sameness of his own mates on the Ocean Liner and in Scene Five he sees the likeness all upper class to Mildred. Yank's new understanding of class intensifies his struggle to break free from his class boundaries while simultaneously making his attempt seem all the more futile.

Scenes Seven and Eight complete Yank's deterioration into an animalistic state. While in Scene Seven Yank rejects the "ape" identity, he embraces it again in Scene Eight as the animal world suddenly presents itself as his last hope of "belonging." Yank cannot meld himself into any societal group and is finally destroyed by his attempts to befriend the animal group. Hubert Zapf, in O'Neill's *Hairy Ape and the Reversal of Hegelian Dialectics* characterizes Yank as the result of social progress, "Modern man's loss of any sort of cultural or social identity the anonymous, non-communicative nature of industrial society; the captivity of individuals in circumstances alien to their most fundamental anthropological needs."

Initially Yank sees himself as the motivator of progress—the steel and the engine that drives the Ocean Liner or modern society. Yank does not realize that as the "mover," the industrial worker, he is caged in the bottom of the ship and never feels any of the benefits of the ship's movement. While Yank shovels coal into the engine, the upper classes, symbolically on the top deck lounge on the promenade deck and take in the sea breeze. Technology has further separated and spread upper and lower classes.

Zapf compared this phenomenon to Hegelian Dialectics. Hegel, a famous philosopher, suggested that progress is a process where two antithetical forces resolve into a new synthesis where opposing forces are preserved. However, O'Neill presents many sets of antithetical forces, but reaches no synthesis. The play resolves with the death of the worker, the death of Yank. Death is the antithesis of progress.

Thus O'Neill deconstructs industrial progress as a means of human progress. O'Neill dramatizes the industrial worker forcefully deteriorated into a primitive, animal-like state by the upper, aristocratic class. The jobs created by steel companies treat men like work animals: they are caged, do one task, and have no need for intellectual thought. Where the poor have regressed to a more natural, animalistic state, the aristocracy has ascended so far above nature they have become artificial beings. Mildred expresses this in Scene Two. She, like Yank, seeks to find synthesis, a new "resolution" between the classes. The synthesis both seek is embodied in the theme of "belonging."

This sense of "not belonging" is the predicament of modern society. Cast into class identities from birth, one becomes the product of the culture and industry they were born into. Yank nor Mildred identify fully with their societal class because they didn't choose them. Mildred describes herself as the "waste" of her father's steel company—she benefits from the rewards, but has no idea of the work and vigor that brought them. Yank was born into a working class family from NY and had no opportunity for education or job other than his own. Neither Yank nor Mildred "belong" because they did not join.

The audience journeys with Yank in his fatal quest to find belonging. O'Neill exposes the impossibility of his task, the attempt to define and inscribe one's identity in a world where it has already been sealed.

A month has gone by and Yank has finally been released from prison. Yank stands outside an International Workers of the World office near the local waterfront. Inside the I.W.W. office sits the Secretary putting entries in a large ledger. Yank knocks on the door of the office as if he were entering a secret club. Receiving no answer, he knocks again, this time louder. The Secretary shouts that he should just come in. The men in the room look over Yank who enters the room suspiciously. Yank tells the Secretary that he wants to join the I.W.W. The Secretary is satisfied to hear that Yank is a fireman, as not many have joined. Yank agrees, he tells the Secretary that the firemen are dead to the world. The Secretary makes out a membership card for Bob Smith, Yank's real name, and tells Yank membership will cost him half a dollar. Surprised at how easy it was to join, Yank hands the Secretary the change. The Secretary tells Yank to look at some of the literature on the table and tell the men on his ship about what the I.W.W. are doing.

The Secretary asks Yank why he knocked. Yank responds that he thought they would need to check him out to know if he was safe to let in. The Secretary assures Yank that the I.W.W. is above board and does not break any laws. Yank, thinking the Secretary is just trying to test him, gives the Secretary a knowing wink. Yank assures the Secretary that he belongs to the group and he will "shoot de woiks for youse." Yank assures the Secretary that after he is initiated into the group he will show how he belongs to the group. The Secretary again tells Yank the I.W.W. has no secrets and cautiously asks him if he thinks social change should be enacted by legitimate direct action or by dynamite. Yank enthusiastically replies, "Dynamite!" Yank discloses to the Secretary that he wants to blow up Steel Trust, blow up all the steel in the world and then send Mildred a letter, signed the "Hairy Ape."

The Secretary backs away from Yank and gives a signal for the men to search Yank for weapons. The Secretary comes up to Yank and laughs in his face. The Secretary accuses Yank of working for the government, he tells Yank he is the biggest joke they have dealt with yet and calls Yank a brainless ape. The Secretary then instructs the men to throw Yank out. Landing in the street he is confused and pathetic. Brooding, he once again takes the form of Rodin's "The Thinker." Yank describes himself as a busted Ingersoll—he was steel and he owned the world and now steel owns him. Yank asks to the man in the moon for the answer. A policeman tells Yank to move along. Yank asks where he should go and the Policeman tells him "hell."

It is twilight of the next day and Yank looks in on the monkey house at the Zoo. The ape inside sits on his haunches and resembles the Rodin's "The Thinker." Yank admiringly talks to the gorilla and complements his strong arms and chest. Yank sympathizes with the Gorilla who seems to want to challenge the "challenge de whole woild" by pounding his chest. Yank attempts to befriend the ape. He tells the ape that they are alike, as they are both caged and taunted. Yank believes he and the Ape belong to the same club and calls him brother. Yank releases the Gorilla from his cage and approaches the ape to shake his hand. The Gorilla springs on Yank, crushes Yank with his massive arms and then tosses Yank into his cage. Yank dies in the Gorilla's cage as a chorus of monkeys is heard from surrounding cages.

Material and method

The plots of all his works are colorfully drawn by employing the technique of parallels and contrasts. There are moments when O'Neill looks 'history in the eye' the lingered moments that remain vibrant, the scenes that are firmly grounded and the places where magic does not overwhelm realism. This kind of sweeping style has a panoramic power to blend inextricably disparate themes as social mores, political history of a subcontinent, personal agony and haunting literary echoes from all ages and many countries. O'Neill has aptly remarked that his work is read as 'fantasy' in the West and as 'history' in the East.

And after magic realism, if we talk of narrativisation that O'Neill employs in his novels, the unique style he displays in it has amazed us. At the very onset of his novels the beans are spilled to foreshadow the form, theme, and structure of the novel. The title 'perforated sheet' in his novel *The Hairy Ape* indicates the fragmented style that follows in the novel, and 'once upon a time' are the magical word- stars that sparkles in the factual (real) history. And this style is not only followed in this very novel but it explains the narrative technique used in his other works also. The narrative in *The Hairy Ape* holds uniformity in , 's search for his identity, meaning and form both.

O'Neill transforms in his protagonists also. After making , the hero, he in *Shame* dwelled on the peripheral hero who supported the main plot, was centre of the plot sometimes and remained on the edges other time. The female characters of the novel also have their dominance. The peripheral nature of Omar and centrality of Sameer give us a vision of totality. Some people are the centre to the world and others are peripheral entities who are either spectators or passive heroes throughout their lives. We are reminded here of Ogden Nash's poem *Confessions of a Born Spectator* where we get to learn that all of us cannot actively participate but some of us have to satisfy ourselves to remain as mere spectators throughout our

lives.

The novels of O'Neill being products of the project the historycreating individual while the earlier novels focused on individuals as history bearing and history suffering. The new techniques in these novels do not present incidents and vents of history in chronological order. Current events bring to focus events of the past. So artistically is the new and old synthesized that events of the past come alive, making it a living experience. O'Neill is deeply concerned with the politics of the sub-continent in which the common man is an active participant in the making of history.

Postmodernism has opened the doors to a host of new techniques through which the contemporary consciousness can be explored. Literary technique has moved away from the conventional, and freely makes use of unconventional methods. Postmodernist writers like O'Neill himself experiment with non-literary techniques like the cinema.

The modern novels like the modern man search for mystic experience in his effort to be more secular. The worldly-versus-otherworldly structure of the novels is very well interwoven into the tyrant/democrat, innocence/beastliness, male/ female, spiritual/atheistic oppositions. O'Neill's novels are deep penetrated with structural dichotomies that operate on two levels; the plot and the underlying commentary. The tyrant executing the democrat is based on the Robespierre/Danton paradigm. Omar is the devilish reversal of name of the renowned poet as he himself not only uses his prodigious mind for ends more dire than creation of verses, but also turns out on the other-worldly plane to be the chief agent of the evil, the Beast's prey. Thus, not only there is abundance of strands of complexity of metafictional and intertextual undulations, but there is also a powerful current diffusing vision of the other world that grants the ocean an ingenious exceptionality.

Reading out the otherworldly motives from O'Neill's novels needs to be framed in a distinct interpretive horizon; otherwise it will be no more than a tedious exegesis, which is why there is a singular interpretive line for each of the novels, signaled by chapter titles: e.g. 'Grimus: World upon Worlds,' 'Hairy Ape: Road from Kashmir,' 'Shame: An Other World Strikes Back,' or 'The Satanic Verses: Dreamscapes of a Green-Eyed Monster.'

O'Neill while framing his novels has kept in mind use of the postmodern narratives, as his novels resist closure, which is impossible for the textual and the ideological reasons. The arrival of the meaning, which is concomitant with the closure, is repeatedly deferred. Marshal in this context says

The End is the insight that there can be no ending, no beginning, no ground because everything is being endlessly rewritten. No way out of text. (Waugh 90)

Conclusion:

The post-modern strategy that exemplifies this is the mise-en-abyme which repeats the same structure endlessly; it has multiple endings, the text is open ended and it involves the readers in the production of meaning. The mystery goes along the text' it is there even after the reader has come to the last page. The novel begins before the beginning and continues after the ending, as a specific end would 'kill' the text. An aura of mystery sustains every work.

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