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The Irish Identity In Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* 1925  
and Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* 1922**

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*I dedicate this modest work to  
My beloved son Adam*

*Lamia*

*I dedicate this modest work to  
The memory of my dear dad, whose spirit  
continues to inspire me.  
To my beloved children  
Maria and Assirem  
To all members of my family*

*Ania*

## **Abstract:**

This memoir depicts the portrayal of Irish identity through a comparative study between two major literary works “*The Great Gatsby*” by Francis Scott Fitzgerald and “*The Hairy Ape*” by Eugene O’Neill. The aim of this research is to analyse how both works portray the Irish identity as a minority focusing on issues such as identity crisis, social exclusion and marginalization in the early twenties centuries America. This study relies on two theories; Edward Said’s theory of “othering” to show how the Irish immigrants and other minorities are treated as “other”, and Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of New Historicism to put each work in its historical and cultural context. The analysis of these two literary works together yielded the following findings: both Fitzgerald and O’Neill both drawing from personal and cultural experience, they presented literature not just an art but as a political and social commentary; giving voice to the voiceless and revealed the tragic cost of social exclusion, showing That the Irish identity is a metaphor for broader exclusion. Both authors expose the limits of American dream and the cruelty of capitalist system that favour appearance over essence and cruelty over humanity.

***Key words: Identity – Cultural exclusion– Irish representation- Assimilation- Otherness***

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## **I-General Introduction:**

Irish immigration to the United States represents one of the most significant migratory movements in modern history, profoundly shaping the cultural, social, and economic landscapes of both Ireland and America. This historical process which spans several centuries has been marked by various waves of emigration, each driven by unique factors such as religious persecution, famine, economic hardship, and political oppression. The first major wave occurred in the 18th century and consisted largely of Ulster Presbyterians from Northern Ireland. Fleeing oppressive British laws and seeking religious freedom and land ownership, they settled primarily in the New England region. The second and most dramatic wave took place during the mid-19th century, as a result of the Great Famine (1845–1852), caused by the potato blight that decimated Ireland’s primary food source. This humanitarian catastrophe led to the deaths of over a million people and prompted the mass emigration of another million, most of who fled to the United States.

This large-scale displacement had profound consequences for Irish immigrants. While they contributed significantly to the development of American industry and urban growth—working in harsh conditions in mining, railroad construction, and factories—they were met with hostility, xenophobia, and systemic discrimination. Irish immigrants were often stereotyped as violent, uneducated, and morally inferior. Their Catholic faith further deepened their marginalization in a predominantly Protestant America. Thus, the Irish experience in the New World was defined by a paradox: while they were indispensable to the physical and economic building of America, they remained socially excluded and culturally othered.

Although history provides valuable records of this collective migration and its impact, literature offers more intimate exploration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of this experience. Literary works allow for a more nuanced investigation of how Irish immigrants navigated identity conflicts, cultural displacement, and the struggle for belonging in a society that both needed and rejected them. Irish-American literature, in particular, reflects recurring themes such as alienation, identity crisis, othering, and the tension between ambition and social limitation.

In this light, Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) emerge as two important literary works. Though different in style, both engage deeply with issues of identity, class struggle, and exclusion. When set against the backdrop of a rapid industrialized and modernized America, both works depict protagonists Yank and Jay Gatsby who embody the psychological turmoil and dislocation experienced by marginalized individuals. Yank, an Irish-American laborer, is dehumanized by the mechanized world around him and ultimately fails to find a place where he belongs. Gatsby, though not explicitly labeled as Irish in the novel, has been read by some scholars as a figure of Irish-American ascent and aspiration, whose pursuit of the American Dream reveals the illusion of upward mobility in a rigid class structure. These two figures serve as symbolic representations of broader Irish-American struggles: to be accepted, to overcome inherited social limitations, and to craft a coherent identity in the face of cultural alienation. Their trajectories reflect not only personal tragedy but also the larger forces of capitalism, nativism, and modernity that shaped immigrant lives in the early twentieth century.

Valuing the importance of identity in literature, this dissertation aims to explore how identity is constructed, fragmented, and ultimately destabilized in the face of othering and social exclusion. Through a comparative analysis of *The Hairy Ape* and *The Great Gatsby*, this study will investigate how both authors portray the complex processes of identity formation and alienation experienced by individuals situated outside the dominant social order. By focusing on narrative strategies, historical context, and character development, this research seeks to uncover how literature both reflects and critiques the marginalization of Irish communities in modern American society.

## The Review of Literature:

Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* have received a bulk of criticism. Many scholars studied these works focusing on different themes and perspectives. Critics have often examined Fitzgerald's novel and O'Neill's play to discuss the question of society, culture and identity. Several scholars suggest that Fitzgerald's representation of ethnic and marginalized characters shows the anxieties of America during a time of modern change and immigration. One of the leading scholars on Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby* is Matthew J. Bruccoli. In his Introduction to *New Essay on The Great Gatsby* (1985). In his introduction Bruccoli explains both the novel's critical reputation and its artistic value, he recalls that the book was largely overlooked in 1925 and only later achieved recognition as an American masterpiece. A central focus of his analysis is the theme of time, he emphasizes the central role of time in the novel showing how clocks, timetables and songs reflect Gatsby's desire to stop time and recover his past with Daisy, he further observes that Fitzgerald combine real historical details of the 1920's.

For Bruccoli, these details are powerful because they are both real and symbolic; they give the novel the flavour of the 1920's and express its deeper meaning about illusion and reality, while Fitzgerald's combination of real historical details such as songs and dates with imagination symbols like the broken clock gives the narrative both authenticity and symbolic power. Such an approach shows that critics studied not only the social themes of the novel but also its artistic richness and symbolic depth, Bruccoli said: "The novel is a work of genius but it is equally a triumph of craftsmanship". (Bruccoli,1985, P01).

In his introduction to *New Essays on The Great Gatsby*, Bruccoli doesn't only give his own view but he also bring in a range of other scholars and critics to show the different ways *The Great Gatsby* has been studied up to that point, he is not giving his opinion, he is summarizing and positioning existing criticism. He concludes that *The Great Gatsby* is inexhaustible because it operates as social commentary while also achieving great artistic richness through imagery and symbolism, which secure

its lasting place in American literature. He said: “It was a commercial disappointment when it was published in April 1925” (Brucoli, 1985, P02). He added: “*The Great Gatsby* is inexhaustible, thirty-five years after the resuscitation of the novel, it has been possible to assemble these useful new essays” (Brucoli, 1985, P12). The perspective of Matthew J Brucoli reinforces the enduring critical significance of Fitzgerald’s novel and provides a foundation for further interpretation.

Another important voice in *The Great Gatsby* criticism is Harold Bloom with his work Bloom’s Guide (comprehensive research and Study Guides F.Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*), it is a critical guide that examines Fitzgerald’s novel through both bloom’s own interpretation and the perspectives of other major critics. The book explores the novel’s key themes including the American dream, social class, love and moral decay, while providing detailed analysis of its central characters and their symbolic significance. Bloom situated *The Great Gatsby* within its historical and cultural context, highlighting its enduring relevance as a work of American literature and gives a biographical sketch. This guide to *The Great Gatsby* is important because it not only introduces the novel’s significance through Bloom’s own critical perspective, but also because it provides readers with a rich context; a biographical background on Fitzgerald that offers insight into Fitzgerald’s life and discusses the cultural and historical context of the novel, the story behind the work’s creation, also there are summaries and analyses of key themes, selections of critical essays by leading scholars, and annotated bibliographies that direct readers to further researches. Altogether, it serves as an accessible yet comprehensive resource for understanding and studying Fitzgerald’s masterpiece. While Bloom’s collection demonstrates the richness of existing scholarship, it does not explore the specific issue of ethnic representation.

Other critics such as Donald W. Rude in his work *F.Scott Fitzgerald On Joseph Conrad* studied the literary influences on Fitzgerald’s work. He highlights the great impact of Joseph Conrad on *The Great Gatsby*, he argues that Fitzgerald greatly imitated Conrad’s narrative method particularly by creating Nick Carraway as both participant in the story and its narrator. A technique of Conrad’s use of Marlow in his works like *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Donald claimed: “Critics of F.Scott Fitzgerald have long postulated that the author was greatly influenced by works of Joseph Conrad and

that Fitzgerald's use of a character as the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* reflects Joseph Conrad's use of Marlow as the narrator in such works as *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Chance*." "Fitzgerald expressed his admiration for the British novelist in the spring of 1923, during the early part of Conrad's only visit to United States". (Donald W. Rude, 1999, P.217). Fitzgerald's decision to narrate the story through Nick is important because it puts readers to see everything from his point of view which influences how they understand the events, the characters, and the social divisions in the novel.

More recent critics such as Sarah Churchwell studied *The Great Gatsby* from the historical and cultural context, in her work *Careless People: Murder, Mayhem, and the Invention of The Great Gatsby*, she demonstrates how the excesses of the Jazz age prohibition and crimes of the 1920's influenced Fitzgerald's narratives revealing the dark realities behind the glittering surface of the novel, she argues that *The Great Gatsby* should be read not as a romantic tale but as a cultural critique of the American dream, showing how it was already corrupted by materialism, crime and social inequality during Fitzgerald's time.

In a live web chat on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May, at 1pm 201, she said "*The Great Gatsby* is about a human capacity for hope, optimism, wonder, discovery. America represents that symbolically and we are invested in it as a nation but we hardly have a monopoly on it. We are immigrant nation through and through after all".

Similar concerns are raised in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* which received critical attention for its treatment of class conflict and the impact of modern industrial life. Scholars such as Annalisa Brugnoli examined *The Hairy Ape* as a play that questions identity and otherness in modern society in her article "Eulogy of The Ape: Paradigms of Alterity and Identity in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*", she argues that Yank's transformation into an "Ape" symbolizes the dehumanization and exclusion faced by the working class in an industrial society. In his way, the play is presented as a study of alienation and the struggle to belong. She also explains how Yank's gradual transformation into an Ape reflects his loss of human identity and his rejection by the social world around him. For Brugnoli,

this process illustrates the alienation and exclusion of the working class in the modern industrial age, making the play a critique of how society treats those who do not fit within its structures.

Building on Brugnoli's perspective, Fatima Salah A. Alhoumoud offers another critical view point in her work entitled *Social Darwinism on O'Neill's The Hairy Ape: Studies of the Modern Issues and their Influence on American society in the 1920's*. She studied *The Hairy Ape* as more than a play about social class, she explains that O'Neill uses the idea of social Darwinism to show how the workers are treated. Her article aims to demonstrate that *The Hairy Ape* is not only a play concerning the subject of social classes but also an application of social Darwinism, it opens up new significant issue to highlight the exploitation, isolation and alcohol prohibition and women's role in the society that affected all classes of society in the US. However, a social study proposed that social Darwinism is the essence for illustration social classes, the cause of class struggle and change the status of women in the 1920's while male workers were pushed down and dehumanized, women were gaining more rights, freedom in fashion, and a stronger role in public life.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis:**

From the above review of the literature, it is evident that *The Hairy Ape (1922)* by Eugene O'Neill and *The Great Gatsby (1925)* by F. Scott Fitzgerald have been studied individually from various critical perspectives. However, to the best of our knowledge, no previous research has comparatively examined these two works through the lens of identity construction and the marginalization of Irish communities.

Despite their cultural and contextual differences, both texts appear to share similar views and thematic concerns, particularly regarding identity crisis, othering, and social exclusion. This is notably illustrated through their respective protagonists: Yank and Jay Gatsby, who serve as compelling representations of the Irish immigrant experience and the struggle for belonging in early twentieth-century American society.

The aim of this dissertation is to highlight how both authors employed modern narrative strategies to depict the marginalization of Irish characters, revealing the complex process of identity formation

and the socio-historical realities of their time. In other words, this study seeks to analyse how *The Hairy Ape* and *The Great Gatsby* portray Irish identity as marginalized within a dominant American social order, reflecting broader themes of alienation, exclusion, and the search for self-definition.

## **Methodological Outline:**

On the methodological level, this study will follow the IMRAD structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion). The work will be divided into five main sections; to begin with, the introduction introduces the general theme of the research, offering background on Irish immigration and the socio-historical context of the early twentieth century. In addition, the Review of literature and Working Hypothesis provide a review of the existing criticism on both works, identifying the research gap, and formulating the issue and working hypothesis. Moreover, the methodological part draws on Edward Said's theory of "Othering" as developed in *Orientalism* (1978), as well as Stephen Greenblatt's theory of New Historicism. These theoretical approaches will be used to analyze the literary representations of identity and marginalization, while the Materials include a brief summary of each literary work and short biographical notes on the authors. The discussion and analysis section will be divided into two analytical chapters, the first one will examine how the protagonists' identities are constructed and shaped by disillusionment, alienation, and social exclusion. Chapter two will explore the narrative and dramatic strategies employed by the authors to convey themes of othering and marginalization, with a focus on the portrayal of Irish characters. The final section will summarize the main findings of the research, restating the key arguments and contributions of the study.

## **Method and Materials:**

### **1- Method:**

Through this study we intend to compare two modernist works that are F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. We relied on New Historicism in order to demonstrate how the historical circumstances of the twenties are reflected in the works. We also adopted Edward Said's concept of othering as developed in *Orientalism* (1978) to demonstrate how minority groups are represented as different or 'inferior' within the dominant American culture. This theoretical frame work allows us to examine how the immigrants and the working class characters in the two works are in position of exclusion and how such representation serve the interest of hegemonic culture. Finally, we appropriated some aspects of DiClan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995) to connect Irish experience to postcolonial theory and to show how the Irish identity is constructed through stereotypes of primitiveness and exclusion.

### **Edward Said's Orientalism An Overview:**

Our work focuses on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which is a theory that emphasizes the distinction between the Orient and the Occident. The term 'Orient' has often used as an alternative to the term East, it refers to those countries around the Mediterranean and stretches through Asia associated with the Muslim world, also the term 'Occident' has often used as an alternative to the term West that represent Europe and America. In his work *Orientalism* published in 1978, Edward Said explores the history and nature of Western perception and attitudes towards the East. According to him the word 'Orientalism' does not only mean something related to the Eastern countries, yet it also refers to the misrepresentation of the Orientals and their culture.

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* is divided into three parts. The first part 'The scoop of Orientalism' focuses on the Western representation of the Orient, it emphasizes the three binary oppositions that will be demonstrated through the work 'ours' versus 'theirs', 'western' versus 'Eastern',

‘Civilized’ versus ‘Uncivilized’. These binary oppositions reinforce the idea of Orientals as the ‘Others’ and the Westerns as the ‘Self’. In the second part ‘Orientalist Structures and Restructures’ Said explains how philological, historical and literary writers looked at the East in the nineteenth century, in the third part, ‘Orientalism Now’ is about the contemporary American discourses on Orient and the analysis of modern Orientalism.

He firmly exposes the cultural, political, and ideological polarization between the East and the West and a key concept in Said’s work is ‘Otherness’, which is always defined in opposition to the occidental self. In addition, Jean-Francois Staszak (2009) explains that ‘Otherness’ results from a discursive process in which a dominant in group ‘The Self’ constructs one or more dominant out group ‘the Other’. This construction stigmatizes differences real or imagined by presenting it as a negation of identity, thereby creating a motive for exclusion and discrimination. The process of Othering operates by establishing reductive stereotypes, these stereotypes render minority identities either invisible or excessively exaggerated, framing them as outside the dominant socio-cultural order, and in this way individuals are divided into two hierarchical groups ; ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.

While Orientalism primarily addresses the East-West dichotomy, its theoretical implications extend to other colonial contexts, including intra-European relations. To this regard, Declan Kiberd elucidates in *Inventing Ireland* that the Irish over history has been subjected to this process of internal colonialism, he extends Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism to Irish context, Kiberd shows how Ireland was similarly ‘Othered’ within European portrayed as backward, primitive, or not fully modern by England, Ireland though European geographically was treated discursively like an internal Orient. He said: “If Ireland had never existed, the English would have invented it, and since it never existed in English eyes anything more than a patch-work quite of warring fiefdoms their leaders occupied the neighbouring island and call it Ireland”. (Declan Kiberd, 1995, P09). From the beginning, Ireland was seen as a patchwork of warring clans, not a unified nation, English colonizers imposed an idea of a unitary Irish character to justify conquest. Kiberd is aware of Orientalism and postcolonial debates but he uses them flexibly rather than rigidly, as both a resource and a methodological model he uses theory to open questions rather than close them. In fact, by the late sixtieth century English rulers

like Edmund Spenser presented themselves as refined, controlled and rooted while stereotyping the Irish as wild, rude and nomadic, these stereotypes served to highlight English 'virtue' by contrast.

Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* offers a critical exploration of Irish literature and its relationship with the post-colonial theory emphasizing the complexities of identity amidst colonial influence, he argues that Irish writers used literature to resist English stereotypes and to invent a new Irish identity after colonial domination. Irish literature fits within postcolonial discourse, even though Ireland's case is different from the classic colonial models Edward Said discusses, the Irish experience of colonization shows how identity, culture and representation were shaped by colonial power, in this context Kiberd said: "Just as Ireland has produced many brilliant writers in the past century, so these writers have produced a new Ireland" (Declan Kiberd, Harvard University Press, 1996). So poets and intellectuals in Ireland began to challenge the stereotypes through literature to invent a new Irish identity after the crown tried hard to define both English national identity and counterpart Irish identity to reinforce their own power.

In addition, the concept of Othering helps explain how the Irish were depicted by the English as backward, uncivilized, inferior and how Irish writers responded to or resisted those stereotypes. Edward Said's notion of Orientalism and Kiberd's articulation of the Irish postcolonial condition provide tools for understanding the ways in which Fitzgerald and O'Neill depict the Irish as marginalized and socially executed. The Irish community in the early twentieth century occupied a complicated social position, although they are white Europeans they were still considered inferior by the dominant Anglo Saxon elite, even Irishness is not mentioned by name but it is strongly implied through the character's background, language and social position. When applied this theoretical lens to our primary texts it enables a detailed analysis of how Irish and minority characters are othered within the literary works, reflecting wider socio-political structures of exclusion and cultural alienation.

In *The Great Gatsby* the Irish presence emerges through subtle markers of ethnicity and class distinction reflecting how Irish immigrants, in America faced discrimination from the old wealthy families called 'Old money', many immigrants changed their names to sound more Americans to avoid prejudices and be accepted, even Gatsby changed his name. Fitzgerald often wrote about the obsession

to change one's identity to succeed in America, he sympathized with how immigrants had to reshape themselves to fit into the American wealthy class. In *The Great Gatsby*, the concept of Othering appears through the way ethnic minorities and immigrants are described in contrast to the dominant Anglo American elite. Gatsby himself embodied a kind of social othering, despite his wealth he remains excluded from East egg society because of his mysterious background, this shows how cultural hierarchies mark who 'belong' and who is 'other'. Similarly, in *The Hairy ape*, O'Neill exposes the concept of Othering through class and ethnicity. Yank, the stoker, is dehumanized and reduced to a beast-like figure. His working class Irish American identity is central to his exclusion.

Moreover, while Edward Said's Orientalism foregrounds the relationship between literature and imperial power through the mechanism of Othering, it is important to consider how historical and cultural circumstances influence the production and reception of literary texts and in order to develop the mentioned issue, we have made an appeal to New Historicism. The latter is a school of literary theory, first coined by Stephen Jay Greenblatt in his essay entitled "*The power of Forms and the Forms of Power in The Renaissance*" (1982), in which it was introduced as a literary approach that seeks to understand intellectual history through the relation between literature and historical context. Stephen Greenblatt was born in 1943 in Boston Massachusetts, he taught at Harvard University, and he is the main founder of the New Historicist approach. This school asserts that a literary work should be viewed as "a product of time, place and historical circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius". Which means that there is a direct connection between the real facts in a society and the literary texts that are produced.

In fact, Historicism is a theory or style that emphasizes the importance of history and both Old and New Historicism focus on the cultural and historical context of the era in which a work of literature was written, however, New Historicists disagree with several aspects of Old Historicism by establishing new principles, for instance, Old Historicism views the author as a mere reporter, reflecting only the historical events of his time. In contrast, the New Historicists propose a new way of reading history and literature, considering the author as both a reporter and a subjective translator that took part of society. They have also emphasized the link which exists between the historical background of the work and the

reader understands, thus, Greenblatt notes in his essay “*Resonance and wonder*”: The new historicism obviously has distinct affinities with resonance: that is its concern with literary texts has been to recover as far as possible the historical circumstances of their original and conception and to analyse the relationship between their circumstances and our own.

New Historicists, therefore, reject the idea that a text is an isolated piece, as they believe that it is always connected to its historical and cultural contexts to be relevant to the present day. This theoretical framework allows us to understand how *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape* reflect the social and political tensions of their respective periods, particularly in their portrayals of minority figures. By intertwining New Historicism with Orientalism, this study examines how historical narratives and cultural anxieties are inscribed within these literary works.

## **2- Materials:**

### **a. Summary of *The Hairy Ape*:**

*The Hairy Ape* (1922) is a one dramatic acted play with eight scenes. Written by Eugene O’Neill and was first performed in 1922. The play based on the industrialization of the worker and the protagonist’s hunt for his own identity as he degenerates into an Ape-like being. Thus, it relates the social course and the tragic fate of a fireman, Robert Smith, known as Yank. As the play opens, Yank and other firemen, are all stuck inside one small furnace room. At first, Yank feels secure and confident as he stokes the engines of an ocean liner, and is highly pride in his physical power over the ship’s engines and his men. He is proud of his position, and believes in his belonging to the sea, the boat, and his job .All these qualities combined together constructs his world. In parallel, Mildred Douglas, an innocent aristocratic daughter of the steel-magnate president, being disconnected from the working class around her, she lounges on the promenade deck of the ocean liner with her aunt who discusses Mildred’s desire to do service for those in need. Actually Mildred worked with the poor in Manhattan’s Lower East side and is currently on her way to do service projects in Europe.

The ocean liner's second engineer agrees to take Mildred down to the stokehole where Yank and the other men are hard at work shovelling coal in the noisy stokehole at the opening of scene three. In a bright white dress, Mildred is repulsed and frightened at the sight of Yank, She whimpers for the man to take her away from the "filthy beast". Yank feels suddenly diminished, and undergoes "a crisis of identity". Everything he believed to be part of his universe is shaken by her words. He vows to revenge from her.

In the Fourth scene, he leaves the ship, looking for a sense of belonging after being humiliated. Yank and Long have travelled to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York city in scene five; he is arrested, for importuning a churchgoer. Enraged by the thought of Mildred and her father again, Yank starts to bend the bars of his cell in an attempt to escape, but the guards retaliate in force. Upon his release from prison, Yank tries to join "the Industrial Workers of the World" organization but get puzzled with the secretary, who throws him treating him as "a brain less Ape".

Twilight of the next day, Yank is at the zoo. Facing a monkey cage, Yank compares himself with the caged gorilla and attempts to befriend the Ape telling him that they are alike-both caged and taunted and then free him. The beast approaches Yank, wraps him with its huge arms, and smashes Yank's bones. It throws Yank's body to the cage, and shuts the door, letting him die.

### **Biography of Eugene O'Neill:**

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, an American playwright, was born on October 16<sup>th</sup> 1888 at New York City. He is the Third son of an Irish couple Marry Ellen Quinlan and James O'Neill. He travelled with his parents all along America, following with great interest his father who was a successful touring actor in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. O'Neill travelled with his parents all along with America, the fact that helped him lean to the artistic world and theatre. He occupied many jobs, among which seafaring. He lost his parents and his older brother during the period of 1920s. All these facts accentuated his inclination to his pessimistic and tragic outlook on life.

O'Neill is the only American playwright to have won the Nobel Prize for literature and the only dramatist to have won four Pulitzer prizes. He helped to promote the enrichment of American drama; he was the first US playwright to take drama seriously as an aesthetic and intellectual form. Eugene O'Neill's evolution as a playwright is marked by three distinct phases; his earliest plays set on ships and sea, they are based on his own experiences especially as a sea man. During the second phase, O'Neill moved away from strict realism embracing expressionism, his plays based on the influential ideas of philosophers like: Friedrich Nietzsche, psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and the Swedish playwright August Strindberg. O'Neill, final phase in his most introspective, where he returned to realism which most consider the most successful works which depend on his life experiences.

Some of the plays made by O'Neill Eugene are his famous work *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941), which had received the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1957. *Desire under the Elms* (1924), a tragic tale which deals with the ruthless desire of having a land to be lived on.

*The Ice Man Cometh* (1939) it is a poignant exploration of desire, disillusionment and the human capacity for self-deception. *The Hairy Ape* (1921) an expressionist play, it is a scathing critique of the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and capitalism in which the protagonist Yank seeks a sense of their tragic doom throughout a quest for belonging.

### **Summary of *The Great Gatsby*:**

*The Great Gatsby* (1925) is an American classic following Jay Gatsby's quest to win back his long-lost love by faking a successful life, depicting the struggles around love relationships, societal standing and consumerism of people in the 1920's. The events of the novel take place in summer 1922. Jay Gatsby is the central character of the novel, he is known for the lavish parties he organizes each weekend at his ostentatious gothic mansion in West Egg. Gatsby's story is narrated by Nick Caraway, a young man from a Midwestern family who moves to New York in the summer of 1922 to learn about the bond business, he rents a small house in the West Egg district of Long Island, next door to Jay Gatsby, a mysterious millionaire.

Nick drives out to East Egg one evening for dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan and her husband Tom. At the Buchanan's, Nick meets with Jordan Baker, a beautiful, cynical young woman with whom Nick begins a romantic relationship. Jordan tells him that Tom has a lover, Myrtle Wilson, a married woman who lives in the Valley of Ashes. Nick Caraway receives a formal invitation to one of Gatsby's grand parties. Over time, the two become friends, and Gatsby asks Nick to help arrange a meeting with Daisy. One day, Gatsby, Daisy, Nick, and Jordan drive into New York City, where Tom confronts Gatsby in a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom accuses Gatsby of being a criminal whose wealth comes from bootlegging and other illegal activities. On the return trip to East Egg, Gatsby allows Daisy to drive his car. She accidentally runs over Myrtle Wilson, killing her. Gatsby, however, is prepared to take the blame for the accident. Believing that the driver of the car was Myrtle's lover, George Wilson goes to Gatsby's mansion and shoots him before taking his own life. Gatsby's funeral is attended by almost no one—neither his family nor most of his friends are present. Disillusioned, Nick ends his relationship with Jordan and returns to the Midwest.

### **Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald:**

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is an Irish American writer who was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on September 24, 1896. He is remembered mostly for his novel *The Great Gatsby* and for being one of the main members of the lost generation. At the age of 13, Fitzgerald attended St. Paul academy his first writing to appear in print was *The Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage*, a detective story in the school paper. He grew up and spent the first decades of his childhood in New York City. In 1913, he attended the new man school, a catholic preparatory school in New Jersey where he contributed three stories and a poem to the school newspaper and he wrote plays for the Elizabethan dramatic club in St. Paul during summer vacation.

As member of the Princeton class of 1917, Fitzgerald neglected his studies for his literary apprentice's ship. He joined the army in 1917 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry.

Fitzgerald was assigned to camp Sheridan, near Montgomery Alabama, in June 1918; there he fell in love with a celebrated belle, eighteen year-old Zelda Sayre, the youngest daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. The war ended just before Fitzgerald was sent overseas; after his discharge in 1919 he went to New York City to seek his fortune in order to marry. Unwilling to wait while Fitzgerald succeeded in the advertisements business and unwilling to live on his small salary, Zelda Sayre broke their engagement.

In July 1919, he returned to St. Paul to rewrite his novel *This Side of Paradise*. It was accepted by Editor Maxwell Perkins of Scribner in September. In winter of 1919, Fitzgerald started his career as a writer of stories for the mass-circulation magazines. The publication of *The Side of Paradise* on March 26, 1920 made the 24 years old Fitzgerald famous almost overnight, and later, he married Zelda Sayre in New York City on April 3. Seeking tranquillity for his work, Fitzgerald went to France in the spring of 1924. He wrote "*The Great Gatsby*" and fell in vales cure near St Raphael, but the marriage was damaged by Zelda's involvement with a French naval aviator.

In winter of 1924-1925, he revised "*The Great Gatsby*" in Rome and published in April in Paris. Fitzgerald died of a heart attack on December 21, 1940. Among his best literary works; "*This side of Paradise*" (1922 ), "*The Beautiful and Damned*" (1922); "*The Great Gatsby*" ( 1925), "*Tender is the Night*"(1934), "*The Last Tycoon*" (1940), and "*The Crack-Up*" (1945).

## Results:

Throughout this dissertation, we have conducted a comparative analysis of two major modernist works: F. Scott Fitzgerald's "*The Great Gatsby*" (1925) and Eugene O'Neill's "*The Hairy Ape*" (1922). Our study examined how the notion of identity is constructed and deconstructed in both texts, particularly through the lens of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and its broader implications for Othering. We analysed how dominant ideologies produce identity-based prejudices through exclusionary and discriminatory practices, and how the characters in each work respond to these forces within their specific cultural and historical settings.

Applying a New Historicist approach, we also explored how the socio-political context of the 1920s marked by class tensions, immigration anxieties, and post-war disillusionment is reflected in the literary narratives. A particular focus was placed on how both authors represent marginalized groups such as African Americans, Jews, women, and most notably, the Irish. These portrayals underscore the ideological mechanisms by which American society of the time constructed its internal "others" in ways that closely resemble the orientalist structures of domination identified by Said.

In the first section, we demonstrated how Fitzgerald and O'Neill portray identity as fluid and socially contingent, shaped by the surrounding environment and institutional ideologies. Both authors present identity as a contested space, where individuals must navigate ethnic, class, and cultural boundaries in pursuit of acceptance and self-realization. This theme reflects broader societal concerns of the 1920s, including the erosion of traditional values, the rise of industrial capitalism, and the shifting meanings of success and belonging. The protagonists Jay Gatsby and Yank embody the psychological and social costs of trying to assert identity within a system that marginalizes and dehumanizes those who do not conform to its norms.

In the second section, we focused on the notion of *otherness*, as theorized by Edward Said, analysing how the process of "Othering" operates in both works. Said's *Orientalism* posits that dominant cultures construct the "Other" as a means of reinforcing their own superiority and legitimacy. In this

context, Gatsby is portrayed as an outsider who attempts to mask his ethnic and class background to gain access to the Anglo-Saxon elite, thereby internalizing the need to "pass" as culturally acceptable. Similarly, Yank represents the dehumanized labourer alienated, animalized, and excluded from the social elite whose working-class Irish identity positions him as the colonial "Other" within his own society. Both characters are subjected to orientalist logic, not in a strictly East–West binary, but through analogous mechanisms of cultural marginalization and ideological domination.

In sum, this research has shown that *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape* offer profound critiques of early twentieth-century American society, particularly in how it constructs and enforces identity through mechanisms of exclusion. By incorporating Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, we have demonstrated that both works expose the cultural logic of marginalization where dominant social groups sustain power by defining and devaluing the "Other." Thus, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between identity, ideology, and literature in the modernist period.

## Discussion :

- **Chapter One:**

- 1- **Crisis of identity in *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *The Hairy Ape* (1922):**

The word Identity can be defined as the set of personal and behavioural characteristics that distinguish an individual as a member of a particular group. These characteristics often shaped by race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture enable individuals to differentiate themselves from others while fostering a sense of belonging and pride in who they are. (Herbert W. Harris, 1995, P6) In literary studies, the exploration of identity formation and the relational meanings embedded in cultural experiences has become a central concern in recent critical and theoretical discourse. Furthermore, cultural identity has increasingly come under scrutiny, as physical appearance remains a significant marker of identity; any absence, alteration, or distortion of such traits can lead to feelings of confusion and dislocation. Conversely, adopting an aspirational or inspirational identity may provide individuals with a sense of confidence, integrity, and purpose that they perceive as lacking.

This study examines how the crisis of identity is portrayed in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*. In Fitzgerald's novel, the focus is on the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, whose identity crisis reveals how a dominant national culture can exert powerful control over, and even reshape an individual's ethnic or social identity. The novel's depiction of Gatsby underscores the tensions between personal aspirations and societal expectations, illustrating how identity construction is deeply entangled with class boundaries, cultural ideals, and the desire for acceptance. Whereas, in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, the crisis of identity emerges in the context of industrial labor, where working-class individuals confront feelings of alienation and dispossession. The self-identity struggles of characters such as Yank are closely linked to socio-economic structures that marginalize and dehumanize workers. By tracing these conflicts, the play exposes the ways in which societal forces not only influence but

also destabilize personal identity, ultimately leading to a profound sense of disconnection from both self and society.

Despite their different settings and contexts, both works converge on the theme of identity crisis as a consequence of exclusion and social displacement. Gatsby's relentless pursuit of wealth and reinvention reflects his struggle to bridge the cultural and class divides of American society, while Yank's growing alienation stems from his inability to reconcile his place within a mechanized and stratified world. In both cases, the protagonists embody the disintegration of selfhood when individual aspirations collide with rigid societal structures. This parallel invites a deeper exploration of *othering* and the role of external forces in shaping, and ultimately fragmenting, personal identity an issue that will be addressed in the following chapter.

### **a- The Identity of Jay Gatsby:**

In order to understand the various identities the character of Jay Gatsby, it is important to start from his original identity, from the identity of James Gatz, born to a poor farming family in North Dakota, he came from modest Midwestern roots that he later rejected and reshaped in his reinvention as Jay Gatsby. When Nick starts narrating Gatsby's true background he said; "there was one persistent story that he didn't live in a house at all, but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island shore. Just why of these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota, isn't easy to say".

(Fitzgerald, P104). Nick added;

"His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people- his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all." (Fitzgerald, P105). These quotes shows that Gatsby rejected his humble family background and this rejection is as the first step in his reinvention, where he separated himself from his origins and refuses to accept them as part of his true self. He dedicated his life to gain material wealth and social status in order to move away from the life of a farmer, Just as the way Nick

in the novel explains how Gatz has this platonic conception of himself (Fitzgerald, P105). He created an ideal version of himself and tried to live up to that ideal. His identity and values can be explained by observing his surroundings, past, and environment. Nick said;

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God- a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty (Fitzgerald, P105).

The passage reveals the tension between who he was (James Gatz, son of poor farmers) and who he wanted to become (Jay Gatsby, the self- made man of wealth and glamour). This self- invented identity is reflected in Gatsby's immediate environment, his lavish mansions and extravagant parties imitate European aristocracy, reflecting his desire for social prestige, and even his residence in West egg mirrors his position as a man of new money that remains excluded from the old money world of East egg.

Gatz later on, as explained in the novel, attended college of St. Olaf in the southern Minnesota; he worked as a janitor at the time in order to pay for his education. Then after two weeks of college, he dropped out and drifted back to lack superior where he encountered Dan Cody, an extremely wealthy man that provides Gatz a place to stay on his yacht (Fitzgerald 105-106), from this respect Gatsby's dream begins to be realized. Dan Cody bestows Jay Gatsby with an aristocratic life for which he longed for. In addition to that, Jay Gatsby "was quick and extravagantly ambitious" (Fitzgerald p107). Thus by this time James Gatz had the vision of Jay Gatsby as the new vision of himself. As Nick says:

“It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a tom green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the Tuolumne, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him break him up in-half an hour”.

(Fitzgerald P.105).

This passage shows the crucial moment when James Gatz consciously creates Jay Gatsby; a new version of himself shaped by aspiration and imagination. Gatz's new character was well-formed by then. He was promised a lot of money from Dan Cody that would enable him easily misrepresents himself assuming an

identity much grander than his upbringing and opening new doors for him. His attempts to transform himself into a member of the upper class reflect the tension between aspiration and reality in the rigid social hierarchy of early 20th-century American society. In this way, Gatsby embodies the broader struggle of many characters in the novel the desire to invent or fight for an identity beyond the one society has assigned them.

Although Gatsby achieved financial success, his self-constructed identity did not bring him happiness, even his speech reveals his transformation as he adopts a language of refinement, often repeating the phrase “Old Sport” to ingratiate himself in to the culture of wealth and privilege. These details show how James Gatz framed Jay Gatsby, building an idealized self in pursuit of a dream that could never be realized.

Moreover, his next steps take him to the military and Camp Taylor where he meets Daisy Fay. As Fitzgerald explains in the novel, Daisy was the first woman Gatsby met and truly loves and falls deeply for her (Fitzgerald P114), linking everything about her. Jay Gatsby's tragic pursuit of wealth and status, as seen in his love for Daisy and morally questionable actions, illustrates the powerful role of social class in shaping identity. In fact, Daisy's rejection of Gatsby in the past is more than a personal disappointment, it becomes the driving force behind his reinvention. By refusing he because of his poverty Daisy makes clear that love and acceptance in her world depend on wealth and social position.

This rejection, therefore, provides Gatsby with both the motive and the model for his new identity, his identity is not simply self-created out of ambition, but shaped by the need to rewrite the past and make himself worthy of the love he lost. In this perspective, Stuart Hall's theory of identity helps illuminate Gatsby's case, he argues that identity is constructed through social and cultural practices shaped by historical and social forces (Hall,1996,P110-121). Gatsby reflects this idea although he rises to the top percentage of wealth in America, he is never satisfied with his status. Gatsby shows how a poor man can become rich and still feel excluded. Even though he gains wealth, society does not see him as truly equal because real status depends on old money and family background, not only riches. In this way, Gatsby's success never gives him the sense of belonging or happiness he dreams of.

This explains his obsession with the past as he insists, «Can't repeat the past! he cried incredulously. Why of course you can!" (Fitzgerald, p110). By placing his hope in recreating what Daisy once denied him, Gatsby shows how deeply his identity depends on the values and exclusions of his environment.

Gatsby internalizes the value of the upper class and reshapes his identity in their image, but this effort exposes the exclusionary nature of those structures. He is the product of his own dreams and illusions, stripped of his original name "Gatz" and detached from any stable ethnicity or heritage. Therefore, Gatsby can be seen both as the author of his own reinvention and as the by-product of his time. On the one hand, he consciously transforms James Gatz into Jay Gatsby, shaping a new identity through imagination and ambition. On the other hand, his ideals, desires and even his downfall are inseparable from the culture of the 1920's with its obsession with wealth, class distinction and the American dream.

Gatsby's identity shows both his personal efforts to reinvent himself and the influence of the time and society in which he lived. In his world, having wealth means being respected and feeling powerful. Yet money alone does not guarantee acceptance into 'the pure' elite community, beyond riches, one also needs an established family background and social connections. Because Gatsby lacks such lineage, he associates himself with figures like Meyer Wolfsheim, a Jewish outsider who, like Gatsby, would have been viewed with suspicion by the established families of the time. This shows how Gatsby's obscure origins function as an obstacle to his desire for full social acceptance.

As a main theme, identity is central to Fitzgerald's novel, and Gatsby embodies it most clearly. He reinvents himself from a poor Midwest farmer in a mysterious wealthy figure that fit to the society at that time, building a new identity grounded in materialism and wealth, thinking that materialism would help him to acquire new solid identity and reputation, however, his modest origins remains an obstacle, since the elite class still view him as an outsider. Now, Jay Gatsby was the mysterious man living in luxurious mansions that not many people knew. He created a new name that represented him as a successful man everyone seeks to meet. His identity was unknown to any of people that surrounded him, they all wondered who Gatsby really is but no one knew the truth, they have no problem indulging

in his wealth by enjoying his parties, but they all seem to feel that there is something about him that makes him so different. That is his unknown and mysterious identity contributed in shaping his extravagant personality, and speculation began: "Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once. I don't think it's so much that; it's more that he was a German spy during the war" "He's a bootlegger, said the young ladies, one time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil" (Fitzgerald P.66). Gordon, states that Jay Gatsby's identity is built on a facade of wealth and success, masking his true background and heritage (Gordon,D,2021). In fact, the environment and his surroundings play a great role, the West egg represents the "new money" as explained in the beginning. His wealth and success is the visible part of the iceberg, but beneath the surface lies a profound sense of insecurity and a relentless pursuit of a dream that proves to be unattainable.

Gatsby tries to cross this divide by throwing extravagant parties to attract Daisy's attention and get closer to the East egg society, however he never fully belongs there, he is trapped between two worlds; he does not come from East egg's old aristocracy but he also does not truly belong to west Egg either. Fitzgerald points out how; at that time in the United states people have been involved in the "creation of belief, the making of something from nothing, the sovereign power of language and imagination against the paltriness of evidence" (Weinstein,1985,P22-38). Gatsby follows his dreams, hoping that by reshaping himself he could win Daisy's love but despite his wealth, he cannot gain the credibility and heritage required to be accepted by Daisy's social class. James Gatz, the man behind Gatsby is a clear example of identity construction. He reinvents himself to pursue Daisy, but his new identity is based on lies and illusions. This artificial persona becomes his tragic flaw, he cannot reconcile his real past with the image he has built. His attempt to erase his origins and live entirely through a fantasy leads ultimately to his downfall. Fitzgerald examines also how class division shape American society. The gap between social groups split white Americans and reinforced the power of the old aristocracy. For example, characters like Mildred Douglas show how class boundaries control social relationships and limit movement between classes.

Through *Jay Gatsby*, Fitzgerald criticizes the rigid class system in American society. In fact, Jay Gatsby is prevented from his love for the aristocratic Daisy. Thus to gain his love, he tries to break through these social barriers but at the end, his dream collapses because class structures and inherited identity prove stronger than personal ambition. In addition, Myrtle Wilson's case also helps to show how social class and identity are closely connected. Like Gatsby, Myrtle tries to rise above her lower class background and join the wealthy world. She adopts the lifestyle and manners of the upper class to escape her real social position, however, her attempt is fragile and temporary. Her dream of becoming member of the elite makes her blind to the limits placed by society.

Myrtle's aim is to replace the lower-class identity with an upper class one. Like Gatsby, as a member of the elite Myrtle must adopt a new identity that appears as it is constructed within societal frameworks. Myrtle attempts to reshape her identity through her association with Tom and the mimicry of upper-class behaviors, but her efforts expose the rigid boundaries of class and social structure. Her inability to transcend her lower-class origins reflects the limitations imposed by society on those seeking to redefine their identities. The struggle of Gatsby and Myrtle highlight how class divisions shape identity and create deep personal conflicts. A similar struggle appears in Eugène O'Neill's play *The Hairy Ape* through Yank who faces his own crisis as he tries to find his place in a divided society.

### **b- Yank's Self-Identity Crisis:**

In Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, Yank the protagonist experienced a profound self-identity crisis triggered by his perception of societal rejection and dehumanization. He feels lost and doesn't know where he belongs in a rapidly changing world being shattered by societal forces. The purpose of this study lies in the articulation of the aspects behind self-identity crisis in workers, and discover the effects of negative perception upon them, In this play, the focus is on Yank who struggles to find his place and understand who he really is. Here is a more detailed look at how Yank's identity is challenged and fractured. Yank's tragedy is the result of his failure to find belongingness in the society where the world has divided into two parts: the rich and the poor.

To start, it is important to come back to the initial identity of Yank. His identity is rooted in his physical strength and his role in the working class environment. He appears as broad, fierce, very powerful and essential; sure of him and his mates respect his superior strength. He says, I'm de end I'm de start! I start, somep'n and de woild moves!(O'Neill,scene 5). However, this foundation starts to collapse as he becomes aware of the rigid social barriers that separate him from other groups. He and the firemen in the forecastle of the ship are described by O'Neill as "beast's 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.

(O'Neill, scene 1)

Yank, a true devotee of work, considers himself as the force, he is pride in his energy and in that of his class. For Yank, he is in control and his place in the world is founded, being satisfied with the present and pride of his ability and strength. He also rejects the idea that the capitalist class is the reason behind their predicament and alienation believing that he "belongs" and that he is the force that keeps the ship moving. 'It's me makes it move.....I'm de end! I'm destart..... I'm steam and oil for de engines."(O'Neill, scene 5). However, this strong identity starts to break down when he meets the rich woman Mildred Douglas who reshapes his vision about the world and his idea of belonging, she exclaims on Yank, "Oh, the filthy beast"(O'Neill, scene 3).

After this crucial incident, which deeply hurts Yank because it makes him feel like he is not a man but something less and here where his crisis began. From this point, Yank strives to belong and his pursuit of identity in his hierarchical society starts. He goes from one place to another and from one option to another in labor organization, in church, but he does not find his answers in any of these places.

The young lady's brief comments awaken him from his unconsciousness as a way to begin his journey to find himself in agony. He starts to doubt his own strength and importance. He cannot find his place in all activities he tries, but it is also difficult for him to return to his prior position. He says, Christ, where do I get off at? Where do I fit in? (O'Neill, Scene 7).

O'Neill, then, moves his hero Yank through a series of rapidly changing scenes in his quest to belong to find his place in the universe. In his desperate search, he feels so lost that he even goes to the zoo, with a hope to connect with a gorilla, but instead he is crushed to death. This shows the struggle of human beings in their search for identity and the shame and pain they feel when they try to create a place for themselves in a world where they do not fit. Yank dies without knowing his real identity. He is not a part of steel and machinery, but actually, he is their slave, he gets punished by law and gets more and more marginalized in a society that subjugates him.

In both *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*, the protagonist's search for identity shows their deep sense of alienation. Society rejects both them and turns them into symbols; Gatsby, on the one hand, is reduced to the symbol of the self-made rich man who can never fully enter the world of the old money. His origins block his acceptance among the elite class, because in American society true belonging is based on family background and inherited privilege. On the other hand, Yank's sense of self based on his physical strength and hard labour but destroyed by a modern world that instead of being treated as a human being, he is dehumanized and compared to an ape, which makes him an outcast in the modern world.

Conversely, Yank's existential crisis took place in the industrial world, where his sense of self, once firmly anchored in physical labor and brute strength, is violently dismantled by a modern world that no longer acknowledges his worth. The fragmentation of Yank's identity occurs when his unconscious belief that he is strong as an ape collides with Mildred's opinion that he is a "filthy beast". In consequence, this reflection highlights that the decade of the 1920's was characterized by Americans greedy quest to adopt a new identity. Both works highlight and study the issue of identity. Indeed, both works protagonists' struggle to adopt a new identity in their community. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the ambitious but doomed title character grapples with status and identity, reflecting the author's own ambivalence regarding his Irish- American ancestry. By contrast, O'Neill's drama critiques the Irish presence in America over centuries as one long failure to create solidarity with their fellow oppressed, especially people of colour.

### **c- The Portrayal of Irish Identity as a Minority:**

In any examination of identity and otherness within early twentieth-century American literature, it is essential to consider the position of the Irish as a minority group. Thus in this part we discuss the portrayal of Irish identity as a minority in both works. Thousands of immigrants arrived in the 19th century to follow the American Dream. These immigrants lived in New York as they arrived in Ellis Island, New York. This high concentration of immigration led to the tension and prejudice between the different groups. The older, established immigrants came from northern Europe and identified themselves as American. This group felt uncomfortable with the arrival of new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In 1924, the immigration act was passed imposing quotas.

This restricted the number of southern and Eastern European moving to the USA. It also prohibited any Asian to come to the US. There was a lot of prejudice against ethnic minorities. Racism was also widespread. Despite legal measures such as the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 in Britain and the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, Amendments in the United States, African Americans were still treated as second-class citizens. In fact, the prejudice against new immigrants is reflected in Nick's anti-semitic representation of a Jewish character Wolfsheim. He said; "A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril, After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half darkness" (Fitzgerald, P75). Thus, his Jewishness is emphasized by the multiple references to his nose, a feature supposed to be prominent amongst Jews, according to old racial stereotypes. Wolfsheim is even metonymically reduced to his nose "Mr. Wolfsheim's nose flashed at me indignantly". "He turned around in the door and says, 'Don't let that waiter take away my coffee!. Then he went out on the sidewalk and they shot him three times in his full belly and drove away...", "His nostrils turned to me in an interested way» (Fitzgerald P.76). Wolfsheim helps show how Fitzgerald portrays minorities as suspicious figures within the nativist society.

Thus, while Irish identity isn't front and center in *The Great Gatsby*, the novel reflects the broader ethnic anxieties of the 1920's, including fear of rising minorities like the Irish, Italians, Jews and African Americans, threatening the established social order. In fact, the 1920's in America were marked by a

strong belief of Nativism, a belief that those born in the US were superior to immigrants. Groups including Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans were seen as threats to American identity, jobs, and culture. This nativist spirit was reinforced by restrictive immigration laws and cultural values that aimed to preserve what called “pure” American identity. Moreover, at the same time, the Red Scare of 1919-1920 increased suspicion of immigrant workers, who were often associated with radical political ideas and accused of threatening national stability.

Such fears, therefore, fed into broader pattern of xenophobia racism, and religious prejudice with minority groups pushed to the margins of society. This decade saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan discrimination against African Americans, and hostility toward Catholic immigrants like the Irish, being largely Catholics, were doubly marked as outsiders in a predominantly Protestant America. By the end of the decade, when the wall street crash of 1929 struck, these minorities became convenient scapegoats for the economic and social crisis, blamed for unemployment, strikes and poverty after the Wall Street Crash even though they were victims themselves.

Beyond these tensions, The Irish cultural influence was certainly evident in the stories, values, and traditions passed down through Fitzgerald’s family. Irish music, food, and celebration were integral to Fitzgerald’s early upbringing. The Fitzgeralds were originally from country Limerick in the south west of Ireland. The family had a long history of land ownership and were part of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, though they had mostly distanced themselves from their Irish origins by the time they immigrated to America. Indeed, one of the more profound aspects of Fitzgerald’s upbringing was his connection to Irish Catholicism, which played a significant role in shaping his world view. The Irish catholic identity is deeply rooted in a sense of duality a tension between spirituality and the material world, often associated with a sense of self-denial or self-inflicted suffering.

This complex interplay of ideals world resonates throughout Fitzgerald’s writing particularly in his depictions of characters caught between their desires and spiritual or moral values. Fitzgerald, in his works often explores themes of self-doubt, guilt, and the disillusionment that follows the pursuit of wealth and social status. This could reflect the Irish catholic influence in his life, where the moral code

often clashes with worldly temptations. *The Great Gatsby's* characters like Jay Gatsby and the disillusioned Nick Caraway are frequently depicted as grappling with their pasts and their aspirations in ways that are profoundly shaped by the conflicts of identity and belonging, much like the Irish immigrants who navigated the complexities of their new American identity. Gatsby's obsessive pursuit of Daisy Buchanan, a dream he can never truly attain, echoes the Irish immigrant's struggle to reconcile the past with the dream of better future- a pursuit that often ends in disillusionment and, ultimately, despair. Fitzgerald's characters frequently face the tragic consequences of their own desires and ambitions, an aspect of Irish heritage that ties back to the long history of striving against impossible odds, only to be thwarted by fate.

A similar tension of identity and belonging emerges in Eugene O'Neill *The Hairy Ape*, the Irish identity as a minority is embodied in the character of Paddy, an aging stocker aboard a transatlantic ship. He only appears in *The Hairy Ape* in two scenes but he is an essential element of the play. This old Irish man in the ship brings historical perspective to *The Hairy Ape*, he has a philosophy concerning the sailors in the past, those sailors were free, empowered and valued more than the sailors today. Paddy represents the marginalized Irish immigrant working class, one that has historically occupied the lowest rungs of American labor, he is conscious of class discrimination and tries to explain to Yank that Mildred's behavior is not personal and all the rich are alike in their attitudes toward the poor.

The period when O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* was written i.e. 1920s, reflected various racist moods in all aspects, social, economic as well as political discrimination towards strangers or immigrants. In order to change such mentalities and awake the immigrants consciousness, O'Neill himself a stranger imagined his play taking place in a ship. This same boat is representative of the American state divided between acceptance, and refusal of immigrants. O'Neill treats this subject that affects him profoundly. The transatlantic liner, divided to lower and upper deck shows the real image of America divided between xenophobic citizens and estranged immigrants who dream of belonging unaware of their exclusion:

What's dem slobs in de foist cabin got to do wit us!!We're better men dan dey are, ain't,we!! sure!One of us guys could clean up de whole mob wit one mit. Put one of em down here for one watch in de stokehole, what'd happen// dey'd carry him off on a stretcher; Dem boids don't amount to nothin'. Dey're just baggage . who makes dis old tub run;; Ain't it us guys;; Well den, we belong, don't we;; We belong and dey don't. Dat's all. ( A loud chorus of approval, Yank goes on(. As for dis bein'hell-aw,nuist yuh lost your noive, dat's what. Dis is a man's job, get me;; it belongs.(O'Neill scene1)

Through Paddy's nostalgic recollections of the days of sailing ships, O'Neill highlights the dislocation and loss of cultural identity experienced by Irish immigrants in an industrialized and dehumanizing society. Paddy as a simple position within the ship's furnace room, alongside other immigrant laborers, serves as a microcosm of early twentieth- century America's multi-ethnic underclass. His Irishness marks him as doubly marginalized- both as a laborer and as a member of an ethnic minority frequently subjected to social prejudice. The contrast between Paddy's nostalgic sentiments and Yank's aggressive embrace of industrial strength underscores the generational and cultural tensions faced by Irish immigrants seeking belonging in a society that persistently othered them. Thus O'Neill's portrayal of Paddy illustrates the complexities of Irish identity in modern America, revealing how it is shaped by labor, displacement, and social exclusion.

Juxtaposed to Yank's situation, O'Neill, a foreigner of Irish origins came with his parents to America, witnessed especially after the First World War this same sufferance of being rejected, and the segregationist philosophy applied by the government constituted by the bourgeoisie of America. He worked hard to impose his identity and literary touch in the artistic world of theatre. O'Neill works reflected his personal point of view. All of his plays rebelled against the establishment order which he sees as total failure, and the results are apparent in society. Through his characters, O'Neill has viewed attentively the state of the working class, and calls for their moral sense to rebel against the fact of being weaker and being enslaved. This is relevant when Paddy tries to convince Yank to see a future out of the ship that he worships:

I'am thinking- caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the zoo! (With a harsh laugh) Ho-ho,divil mend you !is it to belong to that you're wishing,Is it a flesh and blood wheel of the engines you'd be (O'Neill scene 1).

The extensive treatment of the theme of identity by both writers can be interpreted as the fact that identity is an American dilemma which proved the existence of a dominant social class and highlighted the spread of social inequalities and racism in American Society. This can also reveal that identity quest is really one major, prevailing American literary subject.

## **Chapter Two:**

- **The Representation of the Other in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*:**

The creation of otherness consists of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups "Them" and "Us", and because they are subjected to exclusion and dehumanization, the characters in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape* are in search for new identities. This pursuit of identity foregrounds the mechanism of othering, minorities like, blacks, Jews, women, working class, were constructed as silent others who were treated as mere objects identified with their stereotypical characteristics of primitiveness, violence, and submissiveness. In this way, they are reduced to reductive representations that silenced them, as they are not voiced.

This chapter will therefore examine how such reductive representation of the other operates in both texts ; in *The Great Gatsby*, the analysis focus on the black, Jewish and women as other. In *The Hairy Ape* the focus is on the representation of the working class other, by doing so, the chapter highlights how Fitzgerald and O'Neill use the concept of othering to reflect social hierarchies and tensions in the American society of the 1920's.

### **1- Otherness in *The Great Gatsby*:**

Including nine chapters and around 180 pages, *The Great Gatsby* is a short novel, yet condensed with various themes and ideas that represented the 1920's American society and people are lust for the American dream. The novel first published in 1925, is considered to be Scott Fitzgerald's ground-breaking masterpiece. It serves as a commentary on the 1920's America with all its facets whether good or bad. A period in which American cities witnessed the great migration of blacks coming from the south. These black people stationed in large groups in Harlem, New York, where they started to form communities. This existence of blacks within the white urban society shook the national consciousness about the issue of supremacy and dominance.

In this light, Fitzgerald is considered to be one of the early pioneers who portrayed the social upheavals of the decade in their works. His work mirrored the 1920's. In this context, this sub-section part focuses on the representation of the notion of otherness, which is typically associated with individuals and groups that are different from the norms. This otherness can be marked by outward signs like "race and gender" or inward signs such as "religion and ethnicity". Thus, otherness in *The Great Gatsby* will be analysed by involving blacks, Jews, and women as oppressed minorities in the 1920's American literature. The representation of these minorities (women, Jews, blacks) in terms of otherness. In the novel explains the way things were going within the 1920's American society, as Fitzgerald explains; "You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say", (1945 essay collection the Crack-Up).

In this context, the main focus of this chapter is to conduct a thorough analysis of Fitzgerald's work in order to show the way he depicted women, blacks and Jews and to some extent how he stereotyped them as being others. In his view, Otherness was something inevitable for he lived in a period of social and cultural tensions within America.

## **A- The Black Other:**

The notion of power is attributed to the white race who identify themselves as "us" against others "them". In this case, stands for Tom, Nick, and Daisy who denote the extremist expressions of racial

prejudice that were directly attributed to the colored -black- people presence in *The Great Gatsby*. They showed feeling of superiority of the Anglo-Saxon white race while speaking about other dark skinned being. For instance, Tom mentions a book called "The Rise of the Colored Empires", which reflects actual white supremacist theories circulating in the 1920's America. Tom fears that white dominance is under threat, claiming that: "The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be- will be utterly submerged" (Fitzgerald, P18 -20). This shows how the presence of non-white people in America and in urban spaces especially was seen by many as a threat to white control.

Although the novel is set in New York, it is important to remember that during the 1920's African Americans in the north generally experienced greater freedom and economic opportunity than in The Jim Crow south. They could find better paid jobs, own property and participate more fully in urban life. However, they still faced discrimination and were not treated equally. In the South segregation was enforced through Jim Crow laws, which imposed strict separation in schools, transportation, restaurant and public spaces. Tom's statement reflects the wider racial anxieties of the 1920's a period marked by the resurgence of The Ku Klan Klan which had re-emerged as a powerful national organization during this decade, sought to preserve white protestant dominance through intimidation, racist propaganda, and violent attacks on Africans, immigrants, catholics and jews.

This growing movement mirrored the fears expressed by Tom and others who were worried about losing control in a rapidly changing society, Tom argues that in order to maintain the supremacy of the white race, colored people must be controlled so they would forever remain subordinate and inferior, as others. He says; " It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things.". Daisy continued to support his claim; «We've got to beat them down". (Fitzgerald P.7).

Moreover, another direct indication of the relations that existed between the white and the non-white during the 1920's comes in the passing car scene, when Gatsby, Nick and Daisy pass a luxurious car driven by white chauffeur carrying three African Americans, it momentarily flips the usual racial and class hierarchies. Nick describes them as: «three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl". (Fitzgerald, P74). Nick's reaction highlights the racial tension of the time: In fact, he laughs at the fact that these

black people think that they can be potential competitors to the whites, as if they were equal. This moment suggests the shifting social realities of the 1920's that disturbed white supremacist ideas. Nick narrates;

«As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur in which sat three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in naughty rivalry." Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge."

(Fitzgerald P.74).

Moreover, the representation of certain characters shall be operated in order to reveal the repressed and the hidden manifestations in the practices of Othering that are consciously made by Fitzgerald in the novel. Indeed Meyer Wolfsheim is included as to represent the Jewish Other.

## **B- The Jewish Other:**

Meyer Wolfsheim is the only Jewish character that Fitzgerald created within *The Great Gatsby*, depicted through exaggerated physical features; Nick described him with "A small, flat-nose," "large head," with two fine growths of hair, and "tiny eyes in the half-darkness"(Fitzgerald P.75-76). Fitzgerald stereotypes this Jewish character to distance him from the Anglo-American aristocracy that dominates the novel's social hierarchy. By attributing to Wolfsheim exaggerated physical features and associating him with criminal enterprises, Fitzgerald constructs him as an outsider who despite his wealth and influence, remains excluded from the elite world of characters like Tom Buchanan and Daisy.

The character of Wolfsheim is linked to violence, corruption, vulgarity, and moral decadence. He also represents money-obsessed people. His presence in the novel serves as a reminder of the moral corruption that plagues the era. In fact, Nick notes Wolfsheim's alleged involvement in fixing the 1919 world series, "He's the man who fixed the world's series back in 1919". This association connects Wolfsheim to organized crime and portrays him as morally corrupt and dangerously influential. Another moment that emphasizes Wolfsheim's shady connections occurs when Gatsby explains how Wolfsheim

helped build his fortune by saying; “He”s gambler.....He’s the man who fixed the world’s sries” (Fitzgerald P.78).

This character was included as other in the novel because Fitzgerald was reflecting the social prejudices and ethnic hierarchies of the 1920's America which was predominantly Anglo- Saxon protestant and minorities like Jews, Irish, Catholics and African American were viewed as outsiders.

### **C-Women other:**

The concept of othering, in literature, often applies to individuals or groups who are marginalized and defined in opposition to a dominant norm. Women, therefore, have occupied this position of 'other' within *The Great Gatsby*. Characters like Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson shall be operated in order to reveal the repressed and the hidden manifestations of the practice of othering that are consciously made by Fitzgerald in the novel.

### **1- Daisy Buchanan:**

By the passage of the 19th Amendment, women won the right to vote. A new type of women in that decade depicted by Fitzgerald as the Flapper; a new cultural icon, used to describe a young woman who rejected traditional Victorian values. In *The Great Gatsby*, female characters shared the same characteristics the Flapper had: short haircuts, and skinny dresses. Daisy Buchanan is one of the main characters in the novel. She is married to Tom Buchanan, partially based on Fitzgerald’s wife Zelda, Daisy a typical flapper who represents the paragon of perfection. Nick characterizes her as a careless person as she showed no love and paid no attention toward her baby, when Nick asked her about her daughter, she said: "I suppose she talks, and-eats, and everything."(Fitzgerald P.9).

In Daisy's opinion, women had no place in the world as they had to remain dependent and subordinate to men, she believes that the best thing that a woman can do is to remain silent, passive, and submissive to the demands of the world surrounding her. Yet her actions through the novel showed nothing of rebellion and lust for change of her status. In Daisy's opinion and within the patriarchal American society, they were living in, women would be segregated if they had to show no seeds of intelligence.

Daisy exhibited the unfaithfulness of love and duty that her husband owed to her by having an affair with Gatsby paying no attention to her husband and family. As she assumes the focus of both men, she shows no feelings of comfort and liberty as both went only to exert their power and masculinity by possessing her. Tom sees her as her possession, he said: " she's not leaving me! »(Fitzgerald.,p142) . A clear assertion of patriarchal control. She exists as an object of male desire not as an autonomous individual.

## **2- Jordan Becker:**

Unlike Daisy who is idealized and objectified, Fitzgerald portrays Jordan Becker as an arrogant and irresponsible person, a Flapper, a successful golf player; she is the friend of Daisy and later on becomes Nick Carraway's girlfriend. Jordan did not present the traditional woman, an independent person who enjoyed the company of men. Nick identifies some characteristics in her body that makes her look like a man. He said: " she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms" (Fitzgerald P.10).

To Fitzgerald, Jordan stands as a model for the 1920's woman in the transition between old Victorian values and new modern standards. In the pursuit of freedom and liberty, women, as Fitzgerald tried to present in his novel, lost their femininity. Jordan embodied some flapper values of detachment in her behaviors as well as betrayal and irresponsibility for her actions; she chooses not to tell Daisy the truth of Tom's affair with Myrtle. Nick comments; "It made no difference to me dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame". (Fitzgerald P.31). She is independent and active not the quiet and domestic woman people expect in the 1920's. Her autonomy makes her an object of suspicion within the novel's patriarchal world, thus the men around her mistrust her, criticize or reject her because she doesn't fit the mold.

While Jordan Baker embodies a modern type of femininity independently yet morally ambiguous. Myrtle Wilson represents the working class woman whose desires for social mobility ultimately lead to her downfall.

### 3- Myrtle Wilson:

Myrtle lives with her husband George Wilson who owns an auto garage in the Valley of Ashes, her lust for money and wealth drove her to be the mistress of Tom Buchanan. Fitzgerald describes Myrtle with foolishness as she thinks that Tom loves her and he would leave Daisy for her sake. This character is not shown in positive light as she ignores her husband and treats him badly. Myrtle's stupidity leads to her own death as she runs into a car thinking that it was Tom's car, the latter considers her only as a sexual object with which he would have some fun, providing her with lavish and luxurious gifts making her think that she is valuable when she is not showing how lower class women are dehumanized in both gender and class system. Tom said: «I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife" (Fitzgerald P.130). Although this line is about Gatsby, it reflects Tom's belief that people from lower social classes like Myrtle have no right to aspire to the privileges and relationships of the elite world. Lower class and the upper should not meet.

In his novel, Fitzgerald captured the 1920's figure of emancipated women the Flapper. Yet, women were subjected by men, they were considered as neighbours to the white male dominance. The process of othering the female is apparent throughout the whole narrative. It is true that men like Tom, Gatsby and Nick hover over women, yet women are still powerless in many aspects. In this context, Edward Said claims:

Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travellers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.(Edward Said, 1978, P.207)

Even women are shown as independent creatures, yet they remain tied to the expectation and control of the men around them. This shows that women's independence in the novel is more of an illusion than reality, since male power continues to define their choices and their social positions.

## **Othering in *The Hairy Ape*:**

Unlike *The Great Gatsby* where othering is directed at racial and gender minorities, in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, the concept of Othering is manifested through class based exclusion and social alienation. As Eugene's *The Hairy Ape* was a reaction to the mounting hypocrisy before and after the First World War, so the play reflects the social issues of its time particularly around class distinctions and the labor movements. It highlights how industrial capitalist society subjugates the working class through the character of Yank the play exposes how individuals are dehumanized, reduced to stereotypes and denied belonging within a rigid divided social order. Yank's otherization by a capitalist system conditions him to harbour a wrong idea of "belonging".

O'Neill didn't theorize 'Othering' by name; his plays profoundly depict processes we now label as othering especially along lines of class, culture, and industrial alienation. The play does not depict colonial settings but it reflects a similar process of othering within modern industrial society. The recurring theme of the modern individual's exile from society, from meaning, from self in O'Neill's play reflects colonial othering, where non-western societies are deemed inferior that aligning with Edward Said's idea of orientalism and cultural superiority. "Othering, a mechanism by which dominant groups define and exclude those deviate from the cultural nor: reinforcing hierarchical power structures" (Edward Said p. 332).

### **a- Class and Industrial Othering:**

In addition, the first scene begins with the workers working at the stokehole of a transatlantic liner. The ocean liner, an invention of modern technology represents the first of the machines that played an important role in the first world war. As a word 'Atlantic' has greater significance in its use by developed countries such as America to create an idea of the 'Old world' and the 'New world' which today can be seen in the division between the global North and the global South.

In addition, this idea that countries to the West of the Atlantic Ocean were civilized and the countries to the East of the Atlantic Ocean were uncivilized is problematic and racist. This Atlantic

Ocean operates not only as a physical separation that reinforces hierarchies but as a symbolic division that echoes the old world and the new world according to notions of progress, modernity and industrial prosperity. In this context, Edward Said in *Orientalism* asserts that; “The Orient was almost a European invention and was constructed as a space of exoticism and backwardness to contrast with the progressive, civilized identity of the West” (Said,1978,P.1). Indeed, the men at the stokehole of the linear are dressed in dungaree pants, ugly shoes, passing beer bottles among each other. Their exuberant celebration of life even at the "cramped space in the bowels of a ship"(O'Neill Scene1) contrasts the lifeless Mildred and her aunt on the spacious deck of the ship. O'Neill writes at the outset that:

“The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel.” (O'Neill, Scene 1).

In the same context, Annalisa Brugnoli states that Yank's otherness is presented to the audience by constructing "Onstage a sequence of masked or painted faces" that creates an opportunity to believe that Yank is after all different from an Ape-like figure (Eulogy of the Ape, 2012, P.43). Additionally, Declan Kiberd argues in *Inventing Ireland*, such narratives were historically applied not only to colonized peoples abroad but also to marginalized groups within Western societies, including the Irish and the working classes, although Yank is not literally Eastern, his depiction as a beast-like figure resonates with the same imperialist discourse that constructed the colonized as inferior, reflects what Edward Said describes as a process of ‘Othering’ – a mechanism by which dominant groups define and exclude those who deviate from cultural norms, reinforcing hierarchical power structure. In fact, Yank does not fit into these cultural norms, so he is otherized.

While the concept of othering has often been associated with the colonial encounters between the west and the East, it is necessary to consider the specific case of Ireland as examined by Declan Kiberd to reveal that Ireland, though European, was subjected to the same mechanisms of cultural othering that Edward Said identified in colonial encounters beyond Europe, this theoretical perspective

offers a valuable framework for analysing the processes of exclusion and identity construction in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*.

This reading is directly relevant to the analysis of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*, where characters such as Meyer Wolfsheim and Irish-descended figures undergo similar processes of exclusion.

Kiberd's argument that colonial powers sustain authority by constructing fixed, inferior identities for others mirrors the way Fitzgerald presents Wolfsheim as an ethnic outsider marked by stereotypical traits, reinforcing social boundaries. Likewise, in O'Neill's play, the Irish-American Yank is reduced to a dehumanized laborer, denied belonging in a classist, industrial society. By linking Kiberd's critique of British colonial othering with Said's theory of Orientalism, it becomes clear how both literary works *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape* reflect colonial hierarchies within modern America, exposing the persistence of othering as a tool of exclusion in supposedly democratic societies. Just as Ireland was part of Europe but still invented as an exotic, backward and inferior 'other', Yank is part of the industrial west but still othered and dehumanized thus, in *The Hairy Ape*, although Yank is not literally Eastern, he is positioned as a kind of internal 'other' within western industrial society, a primitive animalistic, much like how the west imagined colonized people, this when Eugene O'Neill is himself describing the stokehole as the "bowels" of the ship" imprisoned by the white steel" it is given that the stokehole is inhabitable.

Yank claims that he can "breathe and swallow coal dust" which is to him as "fresh air" and "food" (O'Neill, Scene1), and if he can do it so he is robbed of his humanity because a human being is not supposed to breathe and swallow coal dust. Moreover, Yank's idea of being a man of hell arises from the early 20th century adoption of masculine primitive among the working class, his unwillingness to clean himself is the playwright's overt attention to the misguided idea of masculine primitive, and they were slaves in the hands of the capitalist owners such as Mildred. (James A. Robinson,1995, P95).

### **b- Mildred's Gaze and Othering:**

Mildred's initiative to serve the poor at Manhattan's lower East side is contrasted with her immediate rejection of Yank as a filthy beast, it is an idea that Mildred has created and doesn't

necessarily mean that Yank is animal-like. As a character from the upper class, she embodies the voice of capitalist judgment, reacting to Yank as an ape-like figure and symbolically reaffirming the working class's exclusion from civilized modernity. The character of Mildred who embodies the bourgeois class, in the play they are referred as bagasse, they don't belong according to Yank, in fact it contrasts with Yank's proletarian status.

Yank's physicality and primitiveness are emphasized to mark him as grotesque body. This serves as a tool for capitalist society to define and marginalizes the working class body as the racialized and primitive other. In this regard, Dassine N. Posner writes that "Yank a worker in the stokehole of an ocean liner, struggles to feel human after Mildred, a first class passenger, and treats him like an ape". (Posner Dassine N,2018,P3-15). Mildred's though he is an ape shows her capitalist tendency to discriminate based on appearance and social status.

Furthermore, the contrast between the white and the blacks and its artificial application is a part of the character's costumes (character's clothing and appearance), Mildred represents power whereas Yank represents the marginalized, the soot and grime on Yank and the workers are part of their costumes not their inherent being. Mildred's spotless with dress, too, is a costume representing an artificial performative identity of class purity and moral superiority.

Yank's animalist figure portrayed exaggeratedly through his blackened face which he chooses not to wash and Mildred's superficiality is portrayed through her stubbornness to wear the white dress while visiting the stokehole. This color opposition (black and white) visually exaggerates the social and class division in the play, where aristocrats are white and filthy rich and instead, the stockers are black and filthy beasts, so Yank puts on an image that society creates for him. Through this contrast, O'Neill portrays two opposing realities of America; one of the rich and powerful reflected by Mildred and another of the poor and powerless represented by Yank. In this way, the play demonstrates how society imposes degrading identities on the working class.

In this context, scholars such as John Nickel claims that by putting characters in this estate , O'Neill cleverly critiques contemporary arguments for black racial retrogression..... to convince his

audience that degeneration is not biological or racial but cultural (P.35). This contrast between white and black in the characters' costumes in *The Hairy Ape* is a deliberately artificial, theatrical device used to symbolize class divisions, social alienation, and othering. It highlights how social identities are constructed through superficial, external signs like clothing and appearance rather than any natural essence, in fact, in the early twentieth century the working class could be seen through the hypocrisy of the capitalists. Yank's mask represents a false identity imposed by society, he is othered when this mask is stripped, revealing his marginalized powerless position. As an Irish American, Eugene O'Neill occupies a distinctive place in American drama, and he was motivated by the discrimination against his Irish-American family by "wealthy Yankee New London", determined to expose injustice, especially against non-whites (Floyd 1981).

*The Hairy Ape* serves as a metaphor for humanity's primal instincts and the dehumanizing effects of class and civilization showcasing the plight of the working class during the early twentieth century whereby characters like Yank are socially and symbolically cast outside the boundaries of accepted humanity, through imagery, language and performance the play erects mechanisms of exclusion.

The derogatory language in the play, including terms like "beasts", "ape", and "ghastly horror", enforces othering by linguistically dehumanizing the stokers. This use of language serves to fix their identity as inferior and dangerous, which is historically used in colonial and classist discourse to marginalize oppressed people. Even in Yank's name, on asking his name Yank answers after a moment of thinking that his name is Bob Smith. Yank has been called Yank for so long that he has almost forgotten his real name. His role of working as a stokehole had unconsciously overtaken his real identity as a human being, and his love of the stokehole with its coal dust is a maneuvered conditioning of the capitalist class.

The industrial Workers of the World's organization serves as another aspect to illustrate that othering is not only social but also institutional; it reflects how systems of power maintain otherness to prevent dissent and protect the interests of the dominant class. Yank enters the union moving

"cautiously", mysteriously" (O'Neill, scene 7), O'Neill description of his entrance is essential to understand Yank's perception and feeling of the union. "He comes to a point opposite the door; tiptoes softly up to it, listens, is impressed by the silence with knocks carefully as if he were guessing at the password to some secret rite" (O'Neill, scene 7). Yank thinks that he is entering a secret place, where he will have important missions, however, he realizes that he is not a part of society outside the stokehole, because of his meaningless speech and weird actions, the secretary thinks that he is a spy and sends him out, calling him " a brainless ape" that once again hints at Yank's identity.

### **c- Social Alienation and Rejection:**

Ultimately, the gorilla's fatal embrace signifies not solidarity but the violent consequence of internalized othering, a man reduced to the image imposed upon him destroyed by the very identity he was forced to accept. Yank's identification with the gorilla revealed Edward Said's explanation that the dominant culture defines other as primitive and inferior. Yank, at the beginning tries to find a girl insulting him to punish her, but at the end, he tries to put himself in a position within society.

Othering in *The Hairy Ape* manifests through classist, racial, colonial and bodily metaphors, marking certain groups as inferior, animalistic or primitive; it shows how industrial capitalism and imperialism perpetuate systems of othering to sustain social hierarchies. As literature is not read in isolation, it acts like a mirror of society. Yank is representative of all the downtrodden he longed for identity and sense of belonging, but his longing ended with despair, his tragic ending show how the idea of capitalism, war, and masculine primitive were responsible for creating alienated men in the modern age.

Both Scott Fitzgerald and Eugene O'Neill have linked their characters to the themes of identity, social alienation, and the relentless pursuit of belonging. They have also portrayed them as strong persons since they refuse to give up and continue to struggle until the end, driven by strong desires to secure their place within a society that continually marginalizes them, until leading to their inevitable downfalls. The protagonists meet death as a brutal truth; in a society built on exclusion of those who seek identity are destined to be destroyed.

## General Conclusion:

Through this dissertation, we have explored the themes of identity crisis, othering and a sense of belonging during the decade of the 1920's, in particular, this search to adopt another identity was crucial for immigrants who have arrived to America with hopes of inclusion. For this purpose, we have selected two American literary works; *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*. Through their different style and genre, both have examined the deep struggles and suffering faced by ethnic minorities and marginalized groups particularly Irish immigrants and the working class who were in an attempt to integrate into a modern American society and have never been accepted. Indeed, this study highlights how their writers denounce the great importance that society puts on status as people can become hollow by making their lives revolve around an evil social construct.

The titles seem to represent two opposite individuals; one is described as great while the other is referred to as an animalistic figure. Indeed, the two works seem to have a kind of similarity in many respects; Gatsby and Yank, the protagonists are in quest for their identity in 1920's respectively, however, they provide somewhat paradoxical views about the American identity both at communal and personal levels. On the one hand, Fitzgerald's socially-oriented novel reflected American society in which social customs and moral values have changed dramatically. Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* is a symbol of the self-made man who wanted to enter the world of the Anglo-Saxon elite. Despite his immense wealth and transformation, he remains excluded from the old money aristocracy because of his Irish background and origins which marks him as outsider.

On the other hand, in Eugene O'Neill's play *The Hairy Ape*, is a profound exploration of the crisis of identity in a modern, industrialized society, it reveals how the Irish workers class are treated as parts of machines and less than a human being seen as outsider and inferior. The need to "belonging" in Yank's world has lost its significance and vitality. It is an age of steel and materialism, not industrialism deprives the working class their spiritual values and humanity.

Though the very different environments and ambitions, both protagonists suffered from a deep sense of non-belonging in the American society, they strived to join. The works reflect the psychological cost of living in a society where some are destined to fail, no matter how hard they try to succeed. Gatsby's rejection by the elite society and Yank's dehumanization in the industrial world despite their efforts to redefine themselves, they are never accepted, this illustrates how class, ethnicity and social status are barriers from finding a stable sense of identity leading them to a feeling of isolation and alienation then to a deep psychological collapse concerning their identity and belonging and questioned their place in the world, Ultimately, to their tragic downfall. In fact, the sense of alienation then endure reflect the historical reality of Irish marginalization in the United States.

Both Fitzgerald and O'Neill expose the tension of class, ethnicity, and power in modern American society, using Irish characters as symbols of social alienation and displacement, while their approaches differ, the depiction of the Irish as outsiders remains a shared theme. This reflects not only the historical prejudices of the time but also the complex intersection of race, class and ethnicity in shaping cultural identities. Gatsby and Yank's downfalls are not just personal tragedies; they represented the broader failure of the American Dream that promises inclusion but enforces exclusion.

Though this study is limited to two works; *The Great Gatsby* and *The Hairy Ape*, it opens the door to more research on how class and ethnicity shape identity and belonging. Future studies could also explore the theme of trauma, especially the psychological effects of exclusion and failure in achieving the American Dream. Studying other immigrant groups could help show how social rejection creates both personal and collective trauma in American society.

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