

Experiences of Self-realization: The Cases of *Yank* and *Gus*

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Abstract

To achieve self-realization, one needs to confront himself/herself and accept what is there beneath the surface. Although it seems to be rewarding, the process of self-awareness might cause destruction, as well. Eugene O'Neill's famous protagonist Yank in *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and Harold Pinter's Gus in *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) are two characters who go through this process of self-realization. Much as these characters fight with their own identities, the plays do not only concern the individuals' efforts to make sense of their existence but also the society as an outside force shaping them during the process. Though not identical, Yank and Gus's efforts to understand their position, their existential crisis, and finally their tragic ends are very similar to each other. It is all the more striking that the two protagonists share similar lower-class backgrounds explicit in their mannerism and speech and that both are obsessed with repeating some phrases as well as actions. In this study, in particular, the focus is mainly on Yank of *The Hairy Ape* and Gus of *The Dumb Waiter* in terms of characters' alienation, class consciousness, and self-realization.

Keywords: Self-realization, Existence, Class Consciousness

Kendini Gerçekleştirme Deneyimleri: Yank ve Gus Örnekleri

Öz

Kendini gerçekleştirebilmek için, insanın önce kendisiyle yüzleşmesi ve görünenin arkasında saklı olanları kabul etmesi gerekir. Öz farkındalık süreci, cazip görünmesine rağmen, bir yıkımı da beraberinde getirebilmektedir. Eugene O'Neill'in *The Hairy Ape* (1992) adlı oyunundaki meşhur kahramanı Yank ve Harold Pinter'in *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) adlı oyunundaki kahramanı Gus, bu tür bir kendini gerçekleştirme sürecinden geçen karakterlerdir. Bu karakterler kendi kimlikleriyle bir savaş içinde olmalarına karşın, oyunlar yalnızca kişilerin varoluşlarını anlamlandırma çabalarına değil, bu süreçte bir dış güç olarak onları şekillendiren topluma da odaklanmaktadır. Birbirleriyle tam anlamıyla aynı olmasalar dahi, Yank ve Gus'ın içinde buldukları konumu anlama çabaları, varoluşsal bunalımları ve nihayetinde trajik sonları birbirleriyle oldukça benzerdir. Her iki kahramanın da gerek kişilik özelliklerinde gerekse konuşma tarzlarında benzer alt sınıf arka planları kendini açığa çıkarmakla birlikte her ikisinin de bazı ifade ve hareketleri tekrarlamayı takıntı haline getirdiği gözlemlenmektedir. Bu çalışmada özellikle *The Hairy Ape* oyunundaki Yank ve *The Dumb Waiter* oyunundaki Gus karakterlerine odaklanılarak bu karakterler yabancılaşma, sınıf farkındalığı ve kendini gerçekleştirme çabaları açısından incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kendini Gerçekleştirme, Varoluş, Sınıf Farkındalığı

1. Introduction

Self-awareness is not a gift given without effort: one must be courageous enough to face himself/herself to accept what is there beneath the skin, beneath the surface. To develop self-realization takes time, requires a mental and sometimes physical process. Moreover, when one achieves the state of self-awareness, it is not guaranteed that the result would make the individual happier, healthier, or more successful because self-realization might cause destruction as well. The protagonist of famous *The Hairy Ape* (1922) by Eugene O'Neill, Yank is a character who goes through this process of self-realization.

Being one of O'Neill's well-known works, *The Hairy Ape* is a play dealing with alienation, class consciousness along with the issue of self-realization. Much as the main character starts a fight with both his own identity, the play constructs society as an outside force that shapes this very identity in the process. Yank, having had a strong sense of belonging, loses the very thing that makes his existence possible, which finally brings him to his fall. Similarly, in his one-act, two-character play *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), Harold Pinter creates a character who experiences a newly acquired class consciousness and self-realization. Though not identical, their effort to understand their position, their existential crisis, and their tragic ends are similar. Harold Pinter's drama is shaped by his commitment to Absurd Theater and *The Dumb Waiter* is often compared to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) mostly because of Beckett's visible influence on Pinter's writing. The striking similarities between the two plays are undeniable, which makes that comparison fruitful and to the point. In this study, however, I would like to compare O'Neill and Pinter's characters in particular Yank of *The Hairy Ape* and Gus of *The Dumb Waiter* in terms of these characters' alienation, class consciousness, and self-realization.

In his article "O'Neill's Beginnings and the Birth of Modernism in American Drama", Frank R. Cunningham claims that O'Neill's drama carries modernist elements and as a playwright, O'Neill deals with "questioning of conventional cultural assumptions, the philosophical alienation, and the rebellious experimentation" (1993:14). Yank might be viewed as an example of such alienation. Having said that, we should emphasize that both Yank and Gus find themselves in the grip of existential crises, trying to understand their existence in the modern, dehumanizing world. Although this article does not specifically focus on existentialism as a philosophical movement, it should, at least, be written that it deals with "the situation of the subject confronted by the brute fact of existence" (Buchanan, 2010: 160). It would be reductive,

however, to think that the plays are simply about one's effort to deal with his/her existence, rather, they tell us the menacing, chaotic world in which the lower-class people often feel entrapped and experience the worst. In this respect, a wealthy, privileged person's existential crisis would not resemble the one Yank or Gus experiences.

2. The Hairy Ape: Yank

John Gassner states that O'Neill's dramas are "short 'slice-of-life' dramas dealing with the miseries, delusions, and obsessions of men adrift in the world" (1965: 11). The protagonist of *The Hairy Ape*, Yank is a stoker adrift in the world. He experiences a journey towards his inner self, yet this experience leads him to his unfortunate end. Although he works with a lot of powerful men "he seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength-the grudging respect of fear" (O'Neill, 1980: 1107). One can deduce that Yank is very pleased with himself and his job. His speech is a sign of his sense of pride:

Say, listen to me wait a moment I gotter talk, see. I belong and he don't. He's dead but I'm livin'. Listen to me! Sure I'm part of de engines! Why de hell not! Dey move, don't dey? Dey're speed, ain't dey? Dey smash trou, don't dey? Twenty-five knots a hour! Dat's goin' some! Dat's new stuff! Dat belongs! (O'Neill, 1980: 1111)

(...)

I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de ting in noise dat makes yuh hear it; I'm smoke and express trains and steamers and factory whistles; I'm de ting in gold dat makes it money! And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting! And I'm steel!steel!steel! (O'Neill, 1980: 1112)

Despite illusionary, Yank thinks that they own that ship, that ship is their home, and that the voyagers are only baggage to the ship, which indicates that they (the stokers) matter, they belong to this

industrialized, modern world. John Patrick Diggins defines Yank as “a happy-go-lucky stoker content with putting his muscle to work for the modern industrial machine” (2007: 5). He is so content and satisfied with this idea of belonging that he cannot tolerate people who show dissatisfaction. For instance, Yank is angry with the union-member Long, who makes speeches about their oppression and Paddy, representing “a second option, that of the romantic past” (Kehl, 1993: 39). When Yank is ready to start work after a break, Paddy says “I’m no slave the like of you. I’ll be sittin’ here at me ease, and drinking, and thinking, and dreaming dreams” (O’Neill, 1980: 1112). Upon hearing Paddy voicing his need to think, Yank asks him: “What’s tinkin got to wit it? We move, don’t we speed, ain’t it? (O’Neill, 1980: 1112). He believes the most important part of the machinery is the working people and if they are the reasons to make that ship move, then they matter. He is blind to the oppression and subjugation of his class; simply he does not think about their position in a capitalist society. On the other hand, Paddy believes that they do not belong to the ship, rather they are imprisoned. His uneasiness is rather explicit; he voices his thoughts during their dialog with Yank. He says: “I’m thinking caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the Zoo!” (O’Neill, 1980: 1111). O’Neill uses foreshadowing as a literary tool; at the end of Yank’s mental journey, he finds himself in the zoo with an ape.

In Yank’s self-realization process, the first phase is the unawareness of his position in the capitalist society, the unawareness of the social and mental barriers that he has. His process of alienation and self-realization start in *Scene Three* with his encounter with an upper-class girl. Mildred Douglas, “a girl of twenty, slender, delicate, with a pale, pretty face marred by a self-conscious expression of disdainful superiority” (O’Neill, 1980: 1113) is on the ship with her aunt as a chaperone. Having been born into a wealthy family, Mildred does not know anything about the working class, in general, lower-class people.

MILDRED [Protesting with a trace of genuine earnestness.] Please do not mock at my attempts to discover how the other half lives. Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity in that at least. I would like to help them. I would like to be some use in the world. Is it my fault I don't know how? I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere. [With weary bitterness.] But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. (O'Neill, 1980: 1113-4)

Later, *the white princess* of the steel industry insists on going down to the stokehole and see the firemen to get to know “the other half”. Unaware of Mildred's being in the stokehole, Yank continues his work; he is naked and speaking loudly with full of slang. Upon noticing that others are looking in the same direction, he turns his head, sees Mildred in a white dress looking like a ghost. For Mildred the situation is more dreadful: “During his speech she has listened, paralyzed with horror, terror, her whole personality crushed, beaten in, collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless.” They look at each other in fear. Mildred says “Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast!” (O'Neill, 1980: 1117) and faints. While she is being carried, Yank “feels himself insulted in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride” (O'Neill, 1980: 1117). Diggins maintains that “Yank's steadfast conviction about his identity and sense of belonging is shattered, not by the hard blows of the ruling class but by a glance of disgust leveled by a weak, frivolous woman” (2007: 72). Yet, this confrontation is the turning point in Yank's life, which makes him trying to think and fills him in with the idea of finding that girl and killing her. He spends a lot of time trying to think, in the position of the sculpture *The Thinker* by Rodin. In *Scene Four*, Yank talks to his friends and tells them “I [he]’ll show her who is a ape” (O'Neill, 1980: 1121).

His second destination is Fifth Avenue where he hopes to find Mildred and get revenge. While looking for her, he unsuccessfully tries to attract attention; he needs to be seen. However, he realizes that he is different

from others and that he does not fit in that place. Upper-class people do not see or accept him, rather, they ignore him, and thus Yank's social awareness begins. He starts to understand that he does not belong. As it was stated by Bigsby, the word "belong" is used many times during *The Hairy Ape*, and "It hints at a disharmony that his characters struggle to resolve, at a space in experience and language that can never be closed" (2000: 6). Having tried to get attention and even fight, Yank cannot reach his aim in Fifth Avenue, but he does enough to be put in prison where he sits again in the position of "The Thinker", trying to think. His self-realization develops in prison because of the bars of the cell. He calls the cell "zoo" and likens himself and others to "apes in a zoo" and "the guard" to "a keeper". While other prisoners talk about I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) and make fun of Yank's behavior and speech, he, in reality, makes very philosophical speeches. Having enough time to think, Yank questions his former idea of belonging. "He made dis-dis cage! It don't belong, dat's what! Cages, cells, locks, bolts, bars- dat's what it meansé- holdin'me down wit him at de top!" (O'Neill, 1980: 1128). He becomes aware of the fact that he is not as strong as he thinks and he does not belong to the ship; he starts losing his self-identity, his power. He, simply, gains class awareness; he is a member of the lower-class and people like Mildred's father, who is the President of Steel Trust, become richer and richer by exploiting them.

Upon learning about the Union and their actions, Yank's next step becomes I.W.W. He enters the union, moving "cautiously, mysteriously"(O'Neill, 1980: 1129). O'Neill's description of his entrance is essential to understand Yank's perception 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, 1980: 1129). Yank thinks that he is entering a secret place, where he will have important missions. Yank's aim is revised- from finding Mildred to "brain(ing) her" to setting Mr. Douglas's up on fire- thus, he is quite eager to be

a member of the union. This desire might be the result of his need to belong again. He explains his plan to the secretary: “I mean blow up de factory, de woiks, where he makes de steel. Dat’s what I’m after- to blow up de steel, knock all the steel in de woild up to de moon. Dat’ll fix tings” (O’Neill, 1980: 1131). Even though Yank’s aim changes, he is still filled with hatred and wants to prove Mildred that he is not an ape. Because of his meaningless speech and weird actions, the secretary thinks that he is a spy and sends him out, also calling him “a brainless ape” (O’Neill, 1980: 1131). Yank finds himself sitting in front of the union, thinking again. “So dem boids don’t tink I belong, neider. Aw, to hell wit ‘em” (O’Neill, 1980: 1132). He is, in James R. Keller’s words, “locked out of civilization” (1993: 50).

Although Yank’s alienation starts with Mildred, his search changes direction when he comes closer to his end. In the beginning, he tries to find a girl insulting him to punish her but, in the end, he tries to put himself in a position within society. Diggins writes that “O’Neill’s sense of alienation is more existential” (2007: 76) and he cites an interview in which the playwright expresses that “The Hairy Ape was propaganda in the sense it was a symbol of a man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way” (cited in Diggins, 2007: 76). Losing his harmony with nature, with society, and with his inner self, he now questions who he is and where he belongs. Before his tragic end, Yank speaks with the gorilla in the zoo, a speech that seems a striking commitment to existentialist philosophers. He says “yuh, don’t belong wit ‘em and yuh know it. But me, I belong wit ‘em- but I don’t see? Dey don’t belong wit me, dat’s what. Get me? tinkin’ is hard” (O’Neill, 1980: 1133). J. Christ Westgate also defines Yank’s dilemma as “both the legacy of Darwinism and the inversion of Sartre’s classic definition of existentialism” (2001: 9). Similarly, according to Gassner, Yank’s fate expressed man’s search for the meaning of his life and his alienation in the universe (1965: 19). Unfortunately, this

alienation, as Bret Cardullo notes “translates into a kind of permanent, fatal existentialism” (2007: 14), brings his tragic end. His death can be viewed as a self-annihilation and comes literally with the hands of a gorilla that crushes him to death. Eugene O’Neill finishes the play with a sentence that summarizes the result of his self-realization: “And perhaps, the hairy ape at last belongs...” (O’Neill, 1980: 1134).

3. The Dumb Waiter: Gus

Harold Pinter’s drama is mostly compared to Beckett’s; yet, he has unique characteristics in his plays such as pauses and silences. Scholars even use a special word to define his style: Pinteresque. Most of his plays can be viewed as Absurd and Realist at the same time. Bernard Dukore defines Pinter’s drama as “an unreal reality, or a realistic unreality” (1962: 45). *The Dumb Waiter* fits this definition very well. Being an example of Absurd Theatre, the plot is rather simple, there are only two characters on stage and the play is set in a simple basement room. The room is windowless and gloomy similar to the stokehole where Yank works. This is significant because it shows us the entrapment of the characters in a dehumanized environment, which can be seen in a realist drama.

The plot devices such as the dumb waiter, speaking tube, and envelope are significant because through the dumb waiter Pinter makes multiple interpretations possible to the questions such as: What does the dumb waiter represent? Who are the people upstairs giving orders? What makes these two men feel obligated to fulfill the orders, satisfy the people above? William Baker asserts that “most of Pinter’s work remain open-ended, capable of manifold interpretation” (2008: 46). Thus, providing answers to such questions is not an easy task because of the variety of possible interpretations. For instance, the dumb waiter might be viewed as the object, as we know it, which was common in special restaurants to give and receive orders without being interrupted by waiters. On the other hand, Ben and Gus wait

for the orders from the beginning to the end, so the dumb waiter can be interpreted as the person who waits and is dumb just like Ben and Gus, who do not know what awaits them. Dukore also makes a similar argument writing that the play is about two men “one who simply--dumbly- accepts, the other who suffers and questions” (1962: 50) and adds that “Ben is a dumb waiter” (1962: 51). One might also take a Marxist stand to claim that Gus and Ben are “the dumb waiters” who are in service of the capitalist society. This interpretation might be true, in particular, for Ben since he is portrayed as a better tool of dehumanizing machinery system. In addition to all these, the play can be interpreted employing Michel Foucault’s theories of power. In his well-written analysis, Charles Grimes writes that “Pinter dramatizes, in Michel Foucault’s phrase, a ‘carceral society’ built on repressive, continual observation and disciplinary coercion, a surveillance that is subsumed into a system of impersonalized authority perceived as inevitable, unexceptional, even beneficial” (2005: 50). Through the dumb waiter, speaking tube and envelope slid under the door, both the readers/audience and Ben and Gus are aware that they are being watched by Wilson or the organization they work for, which forces them to control themselves and behave accordingly.

Clearly, Gus and Ben are two hitmen awaiting instructions for their next victim. When compared to Yank’s, Gus’s self-realization seems to have started earlier than the play’s starting point. From the very beginning of the text, Gus is talkative, looking for answers, and trying to form healthy communication with Ben who is rather dominant, silent, violent, and seemingly superior of the two. The third character is Mr. Wilson, who is the unseen authority, from whom the two hitmen are awaiting orders. My view is that even though Ben is portrayed as more educated and rational of the two, Gus is more curious, his power of deduction and inferential comprehension is better. Penelope Prentice also emphasizes Gus’s superior comprehension. She states that “Gus sees many things Ben is blind to until Gus points them out” (2000: 15).

Gus's efforts to understand can be likened to Yank's need to belong. His repetitive questions to Ben are meant to give meaning to both their current position in an airless room waiting for the orders and their overall situation as hitmen. Much as the readers/viewers do not witness when he starts to question the routine they are stuck in; it is possible that his realization also starts with confronting a woman. As we know it, soon after Yank encounters Mildred, who openly insults and dehumanizes him, his world shatters; his illusionary sense of belonging is lost. Though Pinter does not openly present a similar moment for Gus's realization, the readers/viewers know that their previous assignment affects him deeply:

GUS. I was just thinking about that girl, that's all.

GUS sits on his bed.

She wasn't much to look at, I know, but still. It was a mess though, wasn't it? What a mess. Honest, I can't remember a mess like that one. They don't seem to hold together like men, women. A looser texture, like. Didn't she spread, eh? She didn't half spread. Kaw! But I've been meaning to ask you.

BEN sits up and clenches his eyes.

Who clears up after we've gone? I'm curious about that. Who does the clearing up? Maybe they don't clear up. Maybe they just leave them there, eh? What do you think? How many jobs have we done? Blimey, I can't count them. What if they never clear anything up after we've gone.

BEN (pityingly). You mutt. Do you think we're the only branch of this organization? Have a bit of common. They got departments for everything.

GUS. What cleaners and all?

BEN. You birk!

GUS. No, it was that girl made me start to think (Pinter, 1993: 2372)

Although Gus cannot complete his sentence because of the sudden noise and their realization of the dumb waiter in their room, we can infer that his process of self-realization has recently started. This new phase of Gus makes Ben uncomfortable and surprised, too. Since Ben is not the talkative type, he cannot make sense of these repetitive questions and reprimands Gus repeatedly.

GUS Eh, I've been wanting to ask you something.

BEN (putting his legs on the bed). Oh, for Christ's sake...

GUS. No, I was going to ask you something.

He rises and sits on BEN's bed.

BEN. What are you sitting on my bed for?

(GUS sits.)

What's the matter with you? You're always asking me questions. What's the matter with you?

GUS. Nothing.

BEN. You never used to ask me so many damn questions. What's come over you? (Pinter, 1993: 2370)

Their interaction is almost always one-sided, they cannot have healthy communication, Gus never gets answers to his questions. It should be noted that the plot is centered on their interaction with the unknown person /people upstairs through the dumb waiter and speaking - tube in the room as well as the two hitmen's interaction, or rather non-interaction.

According to Dukore, Pinter's characters are "beaten by the world around them" and they are "reduced to nonentities" (1962: 47). This interpretation can be applied to both Yank and Gus. Just as Yank tries to think of a way out of his role in the indifferent society around him, Gus desperately needs answers. Although his former submissiveness

is stated by the playwright, through his self-realization and alienation, the readers/viewers see Gus as a person who is now aware of the fact that he is just a pawn, even a puppet controlled by unseen forces, like their boss Mr. Wilson and the person/people above. He now knows and states that while Gus and Ben are trying to satisfy them to no avail, they only think about their comfort and luxury. He says: "I'm thirsty too. I'm starving. And he wants a cup of tea. That beats that band, that does" (Pinter, 1993: 2377). Ben, on the other hand, desperately tries to make him/them happy, reprimanding Gus because of what he says and does. In so doing, he tries to secure his leading position. Prentice explains this as follows: "Ironically, Ben can remain dominant only so long as he continues to be wholly subservient to the organization, and he is" (2000: 14). When confronted by invisible authorities, Ben never questions the situation, he is ready to serve the masters beyond question. In this respect, Ben is similar to Yank before his self-realization process starts. He feels content, never asks for more, and ready to acquit the authorities as "a non-individualized cog in a larger machine" (Dukore, 1962: 51). Another example of this can be found at the beginning of the act when Gus expresses his dissatisfaction about the room and in general their life as hitmen, complaining about working hours and conditions. He mentions the windowless room, dirty sheet, his need for another blanket while walking in the room.

GUS: I mean, you come into a place when it's still dark, you come into a room you've never seen before, you sleep all day, you do your job, and then you go away in the night again. (Pause.) I like to get a look at the scenery. You never get the chance in this job.

BEN. You get your holidays, do you?

GUS. Only a fortnight.

BEN (lowering the paper). You kill me. Anyone would think you're working every day. How often do we do a job? Once a week? What are you complaining about?

GUS. Yes, but we've got to be on tap thought, haven't we? You can't move out of the house in case a call comes.

BEN. You know what your trouble is?

GUS. What?

BEN. You haven't got any interests. (Pinter, 1993: 2365)

Instead of thinking about their living conditions, rationalizing what Gus says, Ben believes that they are lucky to have this job: he thinks he belongs. This belonging is illusionary, as well. Yet, Ben does not know that.

As mentioned earlier, even not explicitly written, Ben and Gus are being watched. Ben and Gus know this because of the envelope with matches that they need to light the kettle. However, when they go to the kitchen to do it, they find out that there is no gas. This is contradictory and for some, it might show the sadistic inclinations of Wilson or the organization. Thinking that it was Wilson who has sent the matches, Gus keeps asking questions: "Why did he send us matches if he knew there was no gas?" (Pinter, 1993: 2379). Without an answer, he repeats the question. No answer. He desperately seeks the answers, he repeatedly asks: "Who is it upstairs? What is he doing it for? What's he playing these games for?" (Pinter, 1993: 2380). In the middle of his search for meaning, the dumb waiter falls again with a new order. This is the final straw and Gus, exhausted, picks up the tube and says "WE'VE GOT NOTHING LEFT! NOTHING! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?" (Pinter, 1993: 2380). All these might be parts of a test for them to show, even prove their submissiveness and obedience. In their own panopticon, they might be surveilled by the menacing powers, in which one of them is successful and the other is not.

Right before the curtain, when Gus leaves the room to get a glass of water, Ben hears the whistle in the speaking tube. He finally gets the

instructions. Pinter chooses to have an ambiguous ending. The readers/viewers see that when Gus enters in, he sees Ben's revolver leveled at him. The play ends when "They stare at each other" (Pinter, 1993: 2381). His self-realization, alienation, search for meaning, and raising class consciousness bring him to his tragic end. He has to be silenced.

4. Conclusion

In this study, in trying to pin down the similarities between *The Hairy Ape* and *The Dumb Waiter*, my primary concern has been the characters; how they go through self-realization. Yet, it is all the more striking that Yank and Gus share similar backgrounds. For instance, the use of the dialect of both characters convinces us that both are representatives of the lower-class. Both are portrayed as uneducated, sincere, and talkative men who struggle in the void of modern life and experience alienation in the modern world. Another important similarity between Yank and Gus is their constant repetition, a characteristic often used in Absurd Drama. Yank repeats the words "belong" and "ape" in different phrases so many times because his sense of belonging is shattered upon being called a beast, an ape. Additionally, his posing as Rodin's great sculpture *The Thinker* is repeated throughout the text. Like Yank, Gus is constantly repeating that he means to ask something to Ben. Even though he forms different sentences to express this, through his repeated opening sentences like "I want to ask you something" (Pinter, 1993: 2363) the readers/viewers are fully aware that Gus needs to get some answers. Like Yank, Gus also repeats some actions such as going to the toilet, pulling off the lavatory chain, trying to tie his shoelaces.

Written in the first half of the 20th century, *The Hairy Ape* and *The Dumb Waiter* talk about the human condition in a chaotic, threatening world, where we are always surveilled and controlled by authorities, confronted by forces which threaten our well-being, shatter our sense of identity and try to crumble us. Some of us, like Yank and Gus, go

through self-realization, some others like Ben or Yank's fellow stokers never question the status quo. Yank and Gus begin a search for their own identity only after they are confronted by outside forces (Mildred for Yank and the previous victim of Ben and Gus, an unnamed girl). These confrontations make them start thinking and lead them to question their existence. Unfortunately, at the end of their self-realization process, Yank and Gus experience the worst; the former is dead while the latter finds himself pointed a gun.

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