

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 36
Albee's *The Zoo Story* Part 2

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The Zoo Story

By Edward Albee

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We are continuing to read the play by Edward Albee *The Zoo Story*.

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Synopsis

The Zoo Story is a one-act play in which Jerry, a lonely man, meets another man named Peter at New York City's Central Park and compels him to listen to the story of his visit to Zoo.



We started looking at the outset of the play and the background where in this one act play Jerry is a lonely man who is encountering with deliberately striking a conversation with another man Peter in New York City Central Park and he is being Peter is being compelled to have a conversation with Jerry and this entire one act play is about how things take an ugly turn towards the end.

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Plot Summary

- The play begins with Jerry intruding the peaceful time of a total stranger named Peter, who is sitting on the park bench reading.
- Jerry begins the conversation with "I've been to a zoo, mister" and goes on to ask personal questions about Peter's life. He learns that Peter has a wife, two daughters, two cats, and two parakeets.



These bits of conversation and the kind of insights that we get into these characters lives, their social lives, their psychological dilemmas and the larger social setting which is either facilitating or hindering the kind of conversations that they want to have.

It's in some fundamental ways about a certain man who is stuck in the social world where he cannot he is unable to make contacts personal contacts he is unable to connect to people and hence he is forced to have these very artificial ways of sometimes even very forcibly connecting with people whom he randomly meets around him.



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The Zoo Story
Edward Albee

for William Flanagan



CHARACTERS
PETER: A man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely. He wears tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses. Although he is moving into middle age, his dress and his manner would suggest a man younger.
JERRY: A man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed, but carelessly. What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has begun to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, it is evident that he once was. His fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness.

THE SCENE:
It is Central Park; a Sunday afternoon in summer; the present. There are two park benches, one towards either side of the stage; they both face, the audience. Behind them: foliage, trees, sky. [At the beginning PETER is seated on one of the benches. As the curtain rises, PETER is seated on the bench stage-right. He is reading a book. He stops reading, cleans his glasses, goes back to reading. JERRY enters.]
JERRY: I've been to the zoo. [PETER doesn't notice.] I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!



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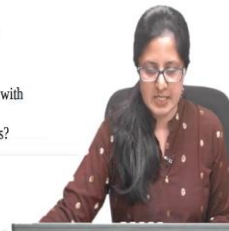
PETER: [puts his book down, his pipe out and away, smiling] No, I really; I don't mind.
JERRY: Yes you do.
PETER: [finally decided] No; I don't mind at all, really.
JERRY: It's ... it's a nice day.
PETER: [stares unnecessarily at the sky] Yes. Yes, it is; lovely.
JERRY: I've been to the zoo.
PETER: Yes, I think you said so ... didn't you?
JERRY: You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don't see it on your TV tonight. You have TV, haven't you?
PETER: Why yes, we have two; one for the children.
JERRY: You're married!
PETER: [with pleased emphasis] Why, certainly.
JERRY: It isn't a law, for God's sake.
PETER: No ... no, of course not.
JERRY: And you have a wife.
PETER: [bewildered by the seeming lack of communication] Yes!
JERRY: And you have children.
PETER: Yes; two.
JERRY: Boys?
PETER: No, girls ... both girls.
JERRY: But you wanted boys.
PETER: Well ... naturally, every man wants a son, but ...
JERRY: [lightly mocking] But that's the way the cookie crumbles?
PETER: [annoyed] I wasn't going to say that.



We will take a look at the play.

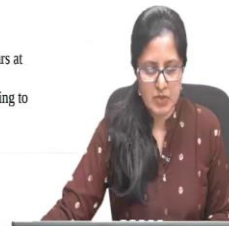
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PETER: [annoyed] I wasn't going to say that.
JERRY: And you're not going to have any more kids, are you?
PETER: [a bit distantly] No. No more. [Then back, and irksome] Why did you say that? How would you know about that?
JERRY: The way you cross your legs, perhaps; something in the voice. Or maybe I'm just guessing. Is it your wife?
PETER: [furious] That's none of your business! [A silence.] Do you understand? [JERRY nods.
PETER is quiet now.] Well, you're right. We'll have no more children.
JERRY: [softly] That is the way the cookie crumbles.
PETER: [forgiving] Yes ... I guess so.
JERRY: Well, now; what else?
PETER: What were you saying about the zoo... that I'd read about it, or see ...?
JERRY: I'll tell you about it, soon. Do you mind if I ask you questions?
PETER: Oh, not really.
JERRY: I'll tell you why I do it; I don't talk to many people except to say like: give me a beer, or where's the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy. You know ist things like that.
PETER: I must say I don't ...
JERRY: But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody, know all about him.
PETER: [lightly laughing, still a little uncomfortable] And am I the guinea pig for today?
JERRY: On a sun-drenched Sunday afternoon like this? Who better than a nice married man with two daughters and ... uh ... a
dog? [PETER shakes his head.] No? Two dogs. [PETER shakes his head again. Hm. No dogs?



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[PETER shakes his head, sadly.] Oh, that's a shame. But you look like an animal man. CATS?
[PETER nods his head, ruefully.] Cats! But, that can't be your idea. No, sir. Your wife and daughters? [PETER nods his head.] Is there anything else I should know?
PETER: [he has clear his throat] There are ... there are two parakeets. One ... uh ... one for each of my daughters.
JERRY: Birds.
PETER: My daughters keep them in a cage in their bedroom.
JERRY: Do they carry disease? The birds.
PETER: I don't believe so.
JERRY: That's too bad. If they did you could set them loose in the house and the cats could eat them and die, maybe. [PETER look blank for a moment, then laughs.] And what else? What do you do to support your enormous household?
PETER: I ... uh ... I have an executive position with a ... a small publishing house. We ... uh ... we publish text books.
JERRY: That sounds nice; very nice. What do you make?
PETER: [still cheerful] Now look here!
JERRY: Oh, come on.
PETER: Well, I make around eighteen thousand a year, but: don't carry more than forty dollars at any one time ... in case you're a ... a holdup man ... ha, ha, ha.
JERRY: [ignoring the above] Where do you live? [PETER is reluctant.] Oh, look; I'm not going to rob you, and I'm not going to kidnap your parakeets, your cats, or your daughters.
PETER: [too loud] I live between Lexington and Third Avenue, on Seventy-fourth Street.



Jerry tries to ask very personal questions, it makes peter quite uncomfortable because it is quite unlikely in his setting to have such intimate conversations with strangers, but Jerry seems to be having no inhibitions.

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rob you, and I'm not going to kidnap your parakeets, your cats, or your daughters.
PETER: [too loud] I live between Lexington and Third Avenue, on Seventy-fourth Street.
JERRY: That wasn't so hard, was it?
PETER: I didn't mean to seem ... ah ... it's that you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions. And I'm ... I'm normally ... uh ... reticent. Why do you just stand there?
JERRY: I'll start walking around in a little while, and eventually I'll sit down. [Recalling.] Wait until you see the expression on his face.
PETER: What? Whose face? Look here; is this Something about the zoo?
JERRY: [distantly] The what?
PETER: The zoo; the zoo. Something about the zoo.
JERRY: The zoo?
PETER: You've mentioned it several times.
JERRY: [still distant, but returning abruptly]: The zoo? Oh, yes; the zoo. I was there before I came here. I told you that. Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class?
PETER: My dear fellow, I ...
JERRY: Don't my dear fellow me.
PETER: [unhappily] Was I patronizing? I believe I was; I'm sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes bewildered me.
JERRY: And when you're bewildered you become patronizing?
PETER: I ... I don't express myself too well, sometimes. [He attempts a joke on himself.] I'm in publishing, not writing.
JERRY: [amused, but not at the humour] So be it. The truth is: I was being patronizing.
PETER: Oh, now; you needn't say that.



No inhibitions whatsoever in asking about either about his family or whether he is planning or not to have another child or even about how much he earns a year. So, all these things seem quite out of place though these are very ordinary mundane questions, they seem quite out of place given that they are just two strangers who have met and there is no background for them to have a conversation like this.

It's not even like the not even like a random park conversation, we find Jerry trying to push the limits of the social boundaries over there and the social boundaries which are also heavily dictated by set by the existing socio cultural and economic conditions and what makes it all the most strange is the fact that they both evidently belong to two different social strata.

So, there is a limit to the kind of conversations that they can have it is Peter who is very conscious of these boundaries and the discomfort emanates from that. So, this discomfort is what the play also capitalizes on the discomfort which leads to a tragedy which is personal tragedy and by extension the tragedy of the social conditions in which the play is set as well.

So, the conversation that Jerry begins Jerry begins to strike this conversation with Peter and it's about the zoo he wants to tell a story about visit to zoo and after having asked certain personal details which makes Peter uncomfortable he again comes back to talking about the zoo the zoo something about the zoo.

“You have mentioned it several times zoo yes the zoo I was there before I came here I told you that. Say what is the dividing line between upper middle class and lower upper middle class? “So, we find the class question emerging very centrally in the zoo story as well.

If you look at all the other plays that we have discussed so, far as part of this course we find that the question of class and sometimes its mixed with gender sometimes it is evidently mixed with race we find the class question at the heart of all of these plays.

The incidence of class becomes a big deal particularly because of the changing economic situation a change in the changing economic situation which obviously, privileges certain kinds of classes. It is sometimes about lineage, sometimes about individual capacities and we find it operating in multiple ways, that there is no one formula one template which can accommodate and address these questions.

We find class operating for instance in a very different way in emperor Jones where it is also mixed with race and in a play like all my sons we find that two families, they in some sense belong to the same social class.

They also used to belong to the same economic class because they were business partners too, the two families, but we find that there is something underneath that in terms of individual value systems, in terms of individual responses to situations that also makes this divide come in and manifest in many different ways.

The class question is deeply embedded in the socio economic situation of most of these plays and they further accentuated either by the family differences or the psychological individual differences or due to the peculiar situations into which each of the characters find themselves in. Here, we find that the economic divide the class divide between these two characters it's very evident over here, but it's very evident, but Peter does not want to acknowledge that in any way.

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here. I told you that. Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class?

PETER: My dear fellow, I ...

JERRY: Don't my dear fellow me.

PETER: [unhappily] Was I patronizing? I believe I was; I'm sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes bewildered me.

JERRY: And when you're bewildered you become patronizing?



PETER: I ... I don't express myself too well, sometimes. [He attempts a joke on himself.] I'm in publishing, not writing.

JERRY: [amused, but not at the humour] So be it. The truth is: I was being patronizing.

PETER: Oh, now; you needn't say that.

[It is at this point that JERRY may begin to mow about the stage with slowly increasing determination and authority, but pacing himself, so that the long speech about the dog comes at the high point of the arc.]

JERRY: All right. Who are your favourite writers? Baudelaire and J.P. Marquand?



There is a kind of a denial despite knowing that there was a difference. Peter's discomfort initially triggered is triggered by the fact that here is a person who looks different who is almost like another in that context.

They cannot be; they cannot be sitting together in a bench in central park and having an intimate conversation about family and preferences and about pets and children, that is not the ideal social climate that Peter is used to, but Jerry is also, conscious of that the only difference here is that Peter is in denial of that.


“My dear fellow, I do not my dear fellow me look at the difference in language even the body language its very evident from the beginning the way Peter is sitting with a book and the way he is trying to initially avoid the conversation and now the kind of language they use its a vocabulary and the body language, it is also indicative of those are all markers of this divide.

Was I patronizing I believe I was I am sorry, but you see your question about classes bewildered me.” This is the denial which this play is also trying to address, even while inhabiting and accessing the privileges which are part of this which are become available because of this class divide to certain sections of the society, Peter can also afford to ask this politically correct question also he can afford to be rightly bewildered by the mention of class. This we find that operates in the same way as race or gender or caste this bewilderment.

“This bewilderment which also absolves one from getting implicated into this non-egalitarian system and when you are bewildered you become patronizing, I do not express myself too well sometimes he attempts a joke on himself, I am in publishing not writing.”

Here, this discomfort with the body line between this discomfort and his attempt to become kind towards Jerry. It's a very thin line. Jerry amused, but not at the humour. So, be it the truth is “I was being patronizing now you need not say that”. It is at this point that Jerry may begin to mow about the stage with slowly increasing determination and authority, but pacing himself so, that the long speech about the dog comes at the high point of the arc.

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PETER: [wary] Well, I like a great many writers; I have a considerable... catholicity of taste, if I may say so. Those two men are fine, each in his way. [Warming up] Baudelaire, of course ... uh ... is by far the finer of the two, but Marquand has a place ... in our ... uh ... national ...

JERRY: Skip it.

PETER: I ... sorry.


JERRY: Do you know what I did before I went to the zoo today? I walked all the way up Fifth Avenue from Washington Square; all the way.

PETER: Oh, you live in the Village! [This seems to enlighten Peter.]

JERRY: No, I don't. I took the subway down to the Village so I could walk all the way up Fifth Avenue to the zoo. It's one of those things a person has to do; sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly.

PETER: [almost pouting] Oh, I thought you lived in the Village.

JERRY: What were you trying to do? Make sense out of things? Bring order? The old pigeonhole bit? Well, that's easy; I'll tell you. I live in a four-storey brownstone rooming-house on the upper West Side between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West. I live on the top floor; rear, west. It's a laughably small room, and one of my walls is made of beaverboard; this beaverboard separates my room from another laughably small room, so I assume that the two rooms were once one room, a small room, but not necessarily laughable. The room beyond my beaver board wall is occupied by a coloured queen who always keeps his door open; well, not always but always when he's plucking his eyebrows, which he does with Buddhist concentration. This coloured queen has rotten teeth, which is rare, and he has a Japanese kimono, which is also pretty rare; and he wears this kimono to



This is a kind of a role reversal too, we find that Jerry can also become very manipulative. The psychological depth that he has in terms of knowing himself and knowing others it is quite uncanny here. He begins to capitalize on this situation and he begins to patronize Peter and in such a very subtle ways.

We also get an insight kind of a preview into the conversation that lies ahead. “Jerry all right. Who are your favorite writers? Baudelaire and J.P Marquand? Well, I like great many writers; I have a considerable, catholicity of taste, pay attention to the vocabulary over here.”

The conservative nature of taste preferences and the class divide in terms of this taste as well which is getting foregrounded over here. If we may say so, those two men are fine each in his way Baudelaire of course, is by far the finer of the two, but Marquand has a place in our national, skip it.

We get to realize that Jerry is in fact, trying to analyze him as a character, analyze Peter as a character by asking about the preferences, identifying the class markers through that, identifying the biases and prejudices through that and we do this too as students of literature, we do know how in terms of little historiography a writer like Baudelaire and writer like Marquand how they both are placed.

“Do what I did before I went to the zoo today? I walked all the way up Fifth Avenue from Washington Square.” So, if we look at the kind of details that they both exchange in terms of what Jerry offers and also what Jerry manages to cull out from Peter there is a mundane ordinariness, there is an immediacy about the kind of things that Jerry is sharing because there is nothing larger about his life. It’s all about the immediate things where he went before that and what he plans to do right after the streets and the crossings that he crossed on the way.

“But about Peter, he is trying to situate this incident perhaps in the larger scheme of things which is not the case clearly not the case with Jerry for whom this itself is the major highlight of his day. You live in the Village. This seems to 18 Peter. No I do not I took this subway down to the Village.”

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his eyebrows, which he does with Buddhist concentration. This coloured queen has rotten teeth, which is rare, and he has a Japanese kimono, which is also pretty rare; and he wears this kimono to and from the john in the hall, which is pretty frequent. I mean, he goes to the john a lot. He never bothers me, and never brings anyone up to his room. All he does is pluck his eyebrows, wear his kimono and go to the john. Now, the two front rooms on my floor are a little larger, I guess; but they're pretty small, too. There's a Puerto Rican family in one of them, a husband, a wife, and some kids; I don't know how many. These people entertain a lot. And in the other front room, there's somebody living there, but I don't know who it is. I've never seen who it is. Never. Never ever.

PETER: [embarrassed] Why ... why do you live there?

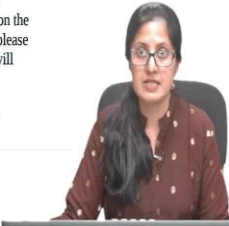

JERRY: [From a distance again] I don't know.

PETER: It doesn't sound a very nice place ... where you live.

JERRY: Well, no; it isn't an apartment in the East Seventies. But, then again, I don't have one wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets. What I do have, I have toilet articles, a few clothes, a hot plate that I'm not supposed to have, a can opener, one that works with a key, you know: a Knife, two forks, and two spoons, one small, one large; three plates, a cup, a saucer, a drinking glass, two picture frames, both empty, eight or nine books, a pack of pornographic playing cards, regular deck, an old Western Union typewriter that prints nothing but capital letters, and a small strong-box without a lock which has in it ... what? Rocks! Some rocks ... sea rounded rocks I picked up on the beach when I was a kid. Under which ... weighed down ... are some letters ... please letters ... please why don't you do this, and please when will you do that letters. And when letters, too. When will you write? When will you come? When? These letters are from more recent years.

PETER: [stares glumly at his shoes, then] About those two Empty picture frames ...?

JERRY: I don't see why they need any explanation at all. Isn't it clear? I don't have pictures of anyone to put in them.



“I could walk all the way up Fifth Avenue to the zoo. It’s one of those things a person has to sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly. There is something very Sisyphian about this exercise that Jerry is doing. It is not about the subways, if we think about the way one ordinarily would look at a subway, it is to make the commute easier. It’s to lessen the distance that to lessen the time taken to cover a distance.”

It’s all about convenience, it’s all about saving time, but here we find a person who in a very Sisyphian way he takes the subway, he takes the subway down to village. So, he could walk up the Fifth Avenue to the zoo. He is taking a roundabout way in order to come back a short distance correctly. It’s a something that entirely beats the rationality of the economy within which the play is within which the setting of the play is placed.

“I thought you lived in the village what were you trying to do make sense of things bring order the old pigeonhole bit well that is easy I will tell you.” So, here we also find that while Jerry’s questions are very pointed while there is of course, a subtle analytical framework which is at work in the background because we as readers, we are also trying to analyze and interpret this. Jerry is trying to there is something very meta textual over here.

Jerry is trying to simultaneously critique what Peter is doing and what as a reader we are trying to do as well. There are a set of random things which are being brought together because of the way Jerry is initiating this conversation and as readers and as a part and as a participant in that conversation. Peter is trying to do is to bring order to make sense out of things.

This is also cutting across this is also trying to majorly challenge the way in which one tries to read text about trying to make sense about trying to bring order. These things cannot be random there has to be a way in which one will connect to the other that is the thing that Jerry is critiquing over here.

“The old pigeonhole bit well that is easy I will tell you. I live in a four-storey brownstone rooming house on the upper West Side between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West. I live on the top floor; rear; west.” He is giving all these details just so, one should not one would not spend a lot of time trying to analyze, trying to read through these texts the Sisyphean exercise of him taking the subway and going all the way till the village so, that he can walk a shorter distance, that is something which will not make sense to a modern mind because it entirely beats the economies of or almost everything which is part of modernity.

We find Jerry offering an easy way out saying, “If there is a question if there is something that you need to know about me you can just ask me directly just the way I ask you directly.” There is no need to post no need to ask a range of euphemistical questions within which one could locate a person within which one could compartmentalize and slaughter a person.

“I live on the top floor rear west it’s a laughably small room and one of my walls is made of beaverboard; this beaverboard separates my room from another laughably small room, so, I assume that the two rooms were once one room, a small room, but not necessarily laughable.”

The placing of the world laughable, we can also run this in our mind and figure out who is laughing at who here. The sarcasm comes out of the intense humiliation and the intense biases and prejudices to which a character like Jerry perhaps has always been subjected to.

“The room beyond my beaver board wall is occupied by a coloured queen who always keeps his door open; well, not always but always when he is plucking his eyebrows which he does with Buddhist concentration. This coloured queen has a rotten teeth, which is rare, and he has a Japanese kimono, which is also pretty rare; and he wears this kimono to and from the John in the hall, which is pretty frequent. I mean, he goes to the John a lot. Here and again pay attention to the vocabulary, the kind of registers which are being used over here.

He never bothers me, and he never brings anyone up to his room. All he does is pluck his eyebrows, wear his kimono and go to the John. This is his life, these are the kind of people who are there in his quote unquote neighborhood. The two front rooms on my floor are a little larger, I guess; but they are pretty small too there is a Puerto Rican family in one of them, a husband, a wife and some kids; I do not know how many. These people entertain a lot. And in the other front room, there is somebody living there, I do not know who it is, I have never seen who it is. Never ever.”

A microcosm of a another kind of life which is on the other side of the city, which is on the other side of the lives that people like Peter inhabit and this microcosm is also its also symbolizes in so, many ways the melting pot that America is. The cultural diversity that it promotes and the flip side of it, the flip side of it which also accentuates the class divide.

There is a superficial diversity, but underneath that there is a there is evidently a diversity, but underneath that there are also a lot of non-egalitarian ways in which the system operates. Peter is embarrassed with these details it’s nothing fancy come its nothing exotic or fancy about this.

“He is an intelligent man who can also sense the darkness underneath it why do you live there? I do not know. It does not sound a very nice place where you live.”

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PEIER: Your parents ... perhaps ... a girl friend ...
JERRY: You're a very sweet man, and you're possessed of a truly enviable innocence. But good old Mom and good old Pop are dead ... you know? ... I'm broken up about it, too ... I mean really, BUT. That particular vaudeville act is playing the cloud circuit now, so I don't see how I can look at them, all neat and framed. Besides, or, rather, to be pointed about it, good old Mom walked out on good old Pop when I was ten and a half years old; she embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states ... a journey of a year's duration ... and her most constant companion ... among others, among many others ... was a



Mr Barleycorn. At least, that's what good old Pop told me after he went down ... came back ... brought her body north. We'd received the news between Christmas and New Year's, you see, that good old Mom had parted with the ghost in some dump in Alabama. And, without the ghost ... she was less welcome. I mean, what was she? A stiff ... a northern stiff. At any rate, good old Pop celebrated the New Year for an even two weeks and then slapped into the front of a somewhat moving city omnibus, which sort of cleaned things out family-wise. Well no; then there was Mom's sister, who was given neither to sin nor the consolations of the bottle. I moved in on her, and mv



“Well, no; it is not an apartment in the East Seventies. But then again, I do not have one wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets. What I do have I have, toilet articles a few clothes, a hot plate that I am not supposed to have.”

All of it looks as if he is been waiting for this one moment to pour out all the mundane details of his life. Everything that has happened in his life, everything that he has in his life which essentially can be packed into this conversation that one is having in central park.

While for somebody like Peter this is only one lazy Sunday afternoon which is not even part of his mainstream life part of his core life , this seems to be life itself for Jerry, this seems to be that one opportunity where he can make a carnival out of his life . So, a Knife, two forks, two spoons, one small, and large three plates, a cup, a saucer, a drinking glass, two picture frames, both empty, eight or nine books, a pack of pornographic playing cards, regular deck, an old Western Union typewriter that prints nothing, but capital letters.

The details also tell tells us about the flawed nature of the items that he possesses. “He possesses an assortment of things everything not necessarily useful, but they are also flawed in some form or the other. And a small strong-box without a lock which has in it. Rocks some rocks. Sea rounded rocks I picked up on the beach when I was a kid. Under which weighed down are some letters please letters please why do not

you do this, and please when will you do that letters. And when letters too. When will you write? When will you come? When? These letters are from more recent years.”

It also gives a sense of longing over here. This is not a very pretty picture there are a set of objects, there are set of things which are very mundane which are some form he is talking about a hot plate that he is not supposed to have among these possessions he owns things which he is not supposed to own. He has things which are completely flawed, he also has things which are useless rocks, there is a box in which he is storing these useless objects these useless rocks.

There are some letters underneath the rocks, and letters which has these questions perhaps “when will you write, when will you come these letters are from more recent years”. So, maybe there are there is a certain background to this, a certain past to this that we are not aware of.

And he is also very clearly separating this from what Peter has a wife two daughters two cats two parakeets . And in those in that description which does not have any object there is a full life over there. Because it an apartment in the east seventies as he puts it that has that picture perfect life it’s an ideal life compared to these random many objects and there are useless and the flawed things which Jerry’s apartment has . This contrast is very evident over here which is why perhaps when Jerry was asking these questions to Peter.

If we go back to the first segment of this play and read it. The questions are pretty much straightforward to which he has a very straightforward answers about which he can be entirely proud of very reputable answers very answers which could accentuate his position in the society but still that makes him uncomfortable and you do find the abstract nature of class divide over here. Jerry is the one who should be embarrassed about the kind of life that he is leading, these are the details which should make one uncomfortable.

But on the other hand, the discomfort that Peter faces is largely because there is an intrusion into his world there is an intrusion into his privacy. So, the play in that sense as it grows, it also asking questions about privacy. Questions about privacy

and how there is an inherent privilege built into it, there is an inherent class angle and an economic state is built into it.

Peter stares glumly at his shoes then he does not know how to respond, this is a clearly the most different conversation the exotic conversation that he has had in his entire life perhaps about those two empty picture frames now, he is also getting curious about Jerry's life.

"I do not see why they need an explanation at all is not it clear? I do not have pictures of anyone to put in them. Your parents perhaps a girlfriend you are a very sweet man, and you are possessed of a truly enviable innocence." These are the expectations which have very again which have markers of privilege as well.

There is an expectation that when there is a picture frame, there is an empty picture frame its not supposed to be empty that is not how it works, there should be a picture of somebody this also operates with this assumption that one takes for granted in more societies that everyone will have somebody whom there can put within a picture frame someone whom they can allot a space for.

And that is not the case here we find it's not as ordinary as naive it has it looks like and Jerry also. We find Jerry is the one who is getting a bit condescending over here due to the circumstances, which clearly this because of the same reason does not offend Peter either, you are possessed of a truly enviable innocence and this is the kind of innocence that somebody with Jerry's background cannot even afford to.

"But good old mom and good old pop are dead. I am broken up about it too I mean really. But that particular vaudeville act is playing the cloud circuit now. So, I do not see how I can look at them all neat and framed besides or rather to be pointed about it, good old mom walked out on good old pop when I was ten and a half years old she embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states a journey of a year's duration."

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celebrated the New Year for an even two weeks and then slapped into the front of a somewhat moving city omnibus, which sort of cleaned things out family-wise. Well no; then there was Mom's sister, who was given neither to sin nor the consolations of the bottle. I moved in on her, and my memory of her is slight excepting I remember still that she did all things dourly: sleeping, eating, working, praying. She dropped dead on the stairs to her apartment, my apartment then, too, on the afternoon of my high school graduation. A terribly middle-European joke, if you ask me.

PETER: Oh, my; oh, my.

JERRY: Oh, your what? But that was a long time ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit to myself. Perhaps you can see, though, why good old Mom and good old Pop are frame less. What's your name? Your first name?

JERRY: I'd forgotten to ask you. I'm Jerry.

PETER: [with a slight nervous laugh] Hello, Jerry.

JERRY: [nods his hello] And let's see now; what's the point of having girl's picture, especially in two frames? I have two picture frames, you remember. I never see the pretty little ladies more than once, and most of them wouldn't be caught in the same room with a camera. It's odd, and I wonder if it's sad.

PETER: The girls?

JERRY: No. I wonder if it's sad that I never see the little ladies more than once. I've never been able to have sex with, or, how is it put? ... make love to anybody more than once. Once; that's it ... Oh, wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen ... and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late ... I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l. I mean, I was queer ... [Very fast] ... queer, queer, queer ... with bells ringing, banners snapping in the wind. And for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son ... a Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine, except he was a year older. I think I was very much in love ... maybe just with sex. But that was the jazz of a very special hotel, wasn't it? And now ... oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. Ever about an



And her most constant companion among others among many others was a mister Barleycorn at least that is what good old pop told me after he went down came back brought her body north we had received the news about Christmas and New Year's you see, that good old mom had parted with the ghost in some dump in Alabama. And, without the ghost she was less welcome.

She was a stiff northern stiff. At any rate good old pop celebrated the New Year for an even two weeks and then slapped into the front of a somewhat moving city omnibus, which sort of cleaned things out family-wise very dark picture of a family.

Something which is entirely outside the league of a person like Peter, it's a very different world out there altogether and this is this family drama with tragedy, adultery the pathos of having an almost orphaned child everything is built into this. It's not now we also begin to see how despite the complexity of the career perhaps Peter has, his family seems quite simple very straightforward very neat one wife two daughter's two parakeets.

There is that neatness is absolutely not there in the small life in the relatively small life that Jerry inhabits. "Well no; there was mom's sister who was given neither to sin nor the consolations of the bottle, I moved in on her, and my memory of her is slight except excepting I still remember still that she did all things dourly; sleeping, eating, working, praying. She dropped dead on the stairs to her apartment, my

apartment then, too, on the afternoon of my high school graduation. A terribly Middle-European joke, if you ask me.”

This is Jerry’s life in a nutshell its tragedy one after the other which also has a lot of uncomfortable family details. There is adultery, there is a father who kills himself, there is an aunt who cannot take the pressure and eventually she too dies.

“It’s a terribly middle European joke if you ask me Peter is beginning to feel sorry. Oh my; oh, my. Your what? But that was a long time ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit it to myself perhaps, you can see though why good old mom and good old pop are frameless. What is your name? Your first name?”

Jerry is very quick to move on from this he evidently he has moved on from all these things and these tragedies which can perhaps scar people for a lifetime, they seem to be these little details that Jerry can bring out during a random park conversation.

But towards the end of the play we also realized that this is all has been bottled up inside him, we do not even know whether he ever had a chance to speak about all this to another human being in his during his adult life maybe which is why this is like one chance that he had been looking for to pour out everything, to share all of this in whichever form with another human being before he brings an end to all of this.

They exchange their names and then let us see the point of having girls picture. So, he is giving a very rational very dark though an explanation of why the empty frames are there.

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park superintendent's son ... a Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine, except he was a year older. I think I was very much in love ... maybe just with sex. But that was the jazz of a very special hotel, wasn't it? And now; oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour.

PETER: Well, it seems perfectly simple to me ...

JERRY: [angry] Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets?

PETER: [angry himself] Forget the parakeets! And stay single if you want to. It's no business of mine. I didn't start this conversation in the ...

JERRY: All right, all right. I'm sorry. All right? You're not angry?

PETER: [laughing] No, I'm not angry.

JERRY: [relieved] Good. [Now back to his previous tone.] Interesting that you asked me about the picture frames. I would have thought that you would have asked me about the pornographic playing cards.

PETER: [with a knowing smile] Oh, I've seen those cards.

JERRY: That's not the point. [Laughs] I suppose when you were a kid you and your pals passed them around, or you had a pack of your own.

PETER: Well, I guess a lot of us did.

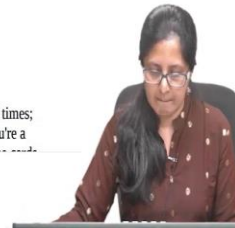
JERRY: And you threw them away just before you got married.

PETER: Oh, now; look here. I didn't need anything like that when I got older.

JERRY: No?

PETER: [embarrassed] I'd rather not talk about these things.

JERRY: So? Don't. Besides, I wasn't trying to pull your post-adolescent sexual life and hard times; what I wanted to get at is the value difference between pornographic playing cards when you're a kid and pornographic playing cards when you're older. Tell that to the people who kid because the cards



“I have what is the point of having girls picture especially in two frames have? Two picture frames you remember. I never see the pretty little ladies more than once and most of them would not be caught in the same room with a camera. It is odd, and I wonder if it's sad.

The girls? No. I wonder if it's sad that, I never see the little ladies more than once. I have never been able to have sex with, or, how is it put? Make love to anybody more than once; that is it. Wait for a week and a half when I was fifteen and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late I was he is just spelling the word out h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l.

I mean, I was queer, there is an unspeakability about the queer sex preference that had an unspeakability about the word homosexual the word homosexuality he does not want to admit he does mentioned that he is a homosexual, but evidently with a lot of shame.”

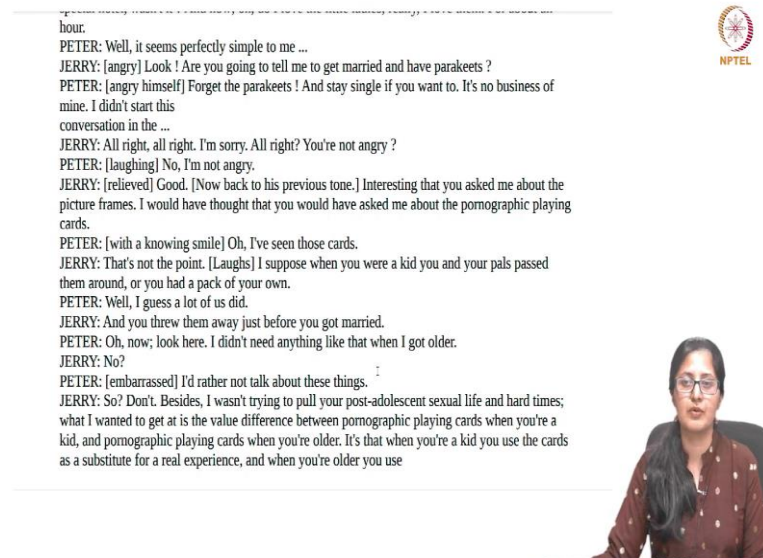
We find this Jerry's life is a huge mess in so, many different ways, it is messed up not due to his fault it's because of the various things around him not working out well because of the circumstances because of the traditional frameworks within which he does not fit in not in terms of a family, there is a hetero normative norm which had gone entirely wrong in his parent's life.

It is tainted by adultery and in his own life his sexual preferences are do come in the way of him inhabiting a normal life, now quote unquote a normal life . “He also says I do love the little ladies really love them for about an hour. Well, it seems perfectly simple to me. Look, are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets? Forget the parakeets stay single if you want to its no business of mine I did not start this conversation.”

This is even when Peter wants to make it easier for Jerry with his words, with his sympathetic words, with his comforting words, it does not work that way. It only offends Jerry in some form or the other. This is quite self explanatory and we can also begin to see how it works as a social critique as well as a psychological critique.

There is an added element of these the cure element which makes it more complex, more problematic given the economies within which a person like Peter is operating.

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hour.
PETER: Well, it seems perfectly simple to me ...
JERRY: [angry] Look ! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets ?
PETER: [angry himself] Forget the parakeets ! And stay single if you want to. It's no business of mine. I didn't start this conversation in the ...
JERRY: All right, all right. I'm sorry. All right? You're not angry ?
PETER: [laughing] No, I'm not angry.
JERRY: [relieved] Good. [Now back to his previous tone.] Interesting that you asked me about the picture frames. I would have thought that you would have asked me about the pornographic playing cards.
PETER: [with a knowing smile] Oh, I've seen those cards.
JERRY: That's not the point. [Laughs] I suppose when you were a kid you and your pals passed them around, or you had a pack of your own.
PETER: Well, I guess a lot of us did.
JERRY: And you threw them away just before you got married.
PETER: Oh, now; look here. I didn't need anything like that when I got older.
JERRY: No?
PETER: [embarrassed] I'd rather not talk about these things. ?
JERRY: So? Don't. Besides, I wasn't trying to pull your post-adolescent sexual life and hard times; what I wanted to get at is the value difference between pornographic playing cards when you're a kid, and pornographic playing cards when you're older. It's that when you're a kid you use the cards as a substitute for a real experience, and when you're older you use

We would try and discuss some of the major themes in the forthcoming sessions and we would find that in this play, it's not about the action per se. But in these words which are exchanged these stories which are being told it does not even matter whether these stories are entirely true or not, but clearly what is being foregrounded over here is the world of differences between two classes which cannot be captured in a linear neat form.

It's a complexity of this, it's the unnarratability of this which is getting foregrounded over here and this is just a one of instance. This encounter between the two classes is just a one of instance also signifying a divide which cannot be easily bridged.