

The Role of Interiorized Power in Sexual Repression: A Foucauldian Reading of Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

During the post-World War II era, American society went through several socio-cultural changes. With the rise of consumer culture, and rapid changes in society, modern people were gradually losing the value of life. However, during the mid-20th century, American theater welcomed playwrights who acted as social critics and portrayed a materialistic society's effects in their works. Among them, Edward Albee emerged as a pioneer who brought European Absurdism, a form of plays that reflects on existential philosophy, to American audiences and blended it with American modernism. Although he kept the Absurdist's style and structure intact, his plays contain a vast range of themes circulating American modern society. Edward Albee's first and also a one-act play *The Zoo Story* (1958) is one such literary work that brings out the illusive world produced by contemporary American society. About four decades later in 2002, he wrote the first act of *Zoo Story* termed 'Homelife.' With the three characters of the full play, Jerry, Peter and Peter's wife Ann, Albee showed an unseen side of modern life. The characters are shown struggling with their own insecure self and constantly trying to fit in the realms of societal constructions. The aim of this paper is to focus on how societal power spreads and engulfs people in the name of civilizing them so that they fit in the socially constructed norms. Moreover, the study will also analyze the play through the ideas of power and sexuality discussed by Michel Foucault. It will mainly focus on Foucault's ideas on interiorization of power discussed in his book *Power/Knowledge* and the repressive hypothesis discussed in *History of Sexuality*. The paper will analyze how interiorization of power restricts people from leading a life with their own choices and how it results in repressing their sexuality.

Key words: Michel Foucault; power; interiorization of power; homosexuality; Edward Albee; modern society.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Sometimes a person has to go a very long distance
out of his way to come back a short distance correctly
The Zoo Story

Are we leading a life according to our own choice or are we heavily influenced by social ideologies? How much control does the societal authority have over the choices we make on a personal and daily basis? Can these power plays and power structures alter our identities? These queries have been explored by philosophers, artists and writers. However, the questions and doubts on whether people have the liberty to ‘live’ a life on their own have been in the works of modernist and postmodernist thinkers. During the first half of the twentieth century, the world witnessed a series of cataclysmic events that changed the way people perceived life. From witnessing two World Wars to the rise of consumerism, the world went through a number of drastic changes, the results of which are seen in the literary works of the period. On the one hand, people were affected both mentally and physically in the aftermath of the war making them lose faith in grand narratives such as social ideologies, faith and the meaning of life. On the other hand, societal changes due to capitalism results in class distinction becoming another source of misery for the vast majority. With all the changes and reformations, American theater during the 1950s welcomed plays which reflected the ongoing issues hidden under the rock of a faulty ‘American Dream’. Two of the major playwrights to mention here are Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. Williams’ 1947 play *A Streetcar Named Desire* reflects class distinction and the arrival of the new immigrant from Europe and the decline of power of the Southern families in American society; and Miller’s 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* portrays the effects of urbanization and capitalism. After only a decade, a new name emerged behind them. In 1958, Edward Albee

wrote his first play *The Zoo Story*, a short one-act play that gained a number of attentions from the audience as well as the critics. After being staged at Berlin, Germany in 1959, the play finally premiered off-Broadway in the United States in 1960. An existential play with an intense conversation between two individuals reflected on some of the major issues people were facing at the post-war era. Although, Albee directly criticized the idea of American dream, the play also explored themes of consumer culture, capitalism, freedom of choice and sexual identity. However, after more than 40 years, in 2002, Albee published a prequel of *Zoo Story* by adding another act in it, which shows the previous events leading up to later events¹.

1.1 Background

Edward Albee has always been open about discussing his works in interviews. In one such interview with *The New York Times* in 1991, he remarked that, “All of my plays are about people missing the boat, closing down too young, coming to the end of their lives with regret at things not done, as opposed to things done”² (Weber). This quote single handedly depicts Albee’s plays, and the themes they explore. After the first production of *Zoo Story*, critics already knew what Albee was bringing to the table— a harsh criticism of American values while bringing out its menacing and real image. However, the play which got him immense popularity in America is *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* written in 1962, a play with which he made his Broadway debut the same year at the Billy Rose Theater in New York. The play which explores the relationship between a middle-aged American couple, was his first full length play³ and it drew attention with the way it depicted raw emotions on stage. With personal and psychological issues between four major characters of the play—the two

¹ The two-acts first went to production in 2007 under the title *Peter and Jerry*. Then in its 2009 production, the play was titled *Edward Albee’s At Home at the Zoo*.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/17/arts/edward-albee-playwright-of-a-desperate-generation-dies-at-88.html>

³ The stage production of the play was almost three and a half hours.

married couples, George-Martha and Nick-Honey, Albee brought out the real image of marriage and personal relationships. Previously, Albee wrote five one-act plays, among which, *The Sandbox* (1959) and *American Dream* (1961) were most successful. During his writing career, he has written more than a dozen plays, and achieved three Pulitzer Prizes. In 1967, he won the Pulitzer for *A Delicate Balance*, which is a dark comedy. Then in 1975, he won a second Pulitzer for *Seascape*, which documents an absurd and existential conversation between an elderly couple and two anthropomorphic lizards. The playwright won his third Pulitzer for *Three Tall Woman* in 1994, a play which has been called personal for depicting Albee's strained relationship with his adoptive mother. Edward Franklin Albee was born in 1928, and was brought up by an adoptive family. Although he had a privileged childhood, he had little to no connection with his adoptive parents. Being a creative mind and living in a conservative household influenced his works as well. However, in the 1940s, he finally broke out of his adoptive family and joined a community of artists in Greenwich village, where his first play was premiered.

Some of the other notable works include *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* (2000), *Tiny Alice* (1964), *Me, Myself and I* (2007). However, Albee's plays often seem to be influenced by the European Absurdist playwrights due to the similarity in techniques and styles. Martin Esslin, who coined the term 'Theater of the Absurd' praised Albee's one act plays as the "promising and brilliant first examples of an American contribution to the Theater of the Absurd" (Kolins 16). Although he structured his plays taking the idea from European Absurdist, Albee's plays have their unique way of storytelling. During the 1950s-60s, playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter and few others produced plays which were mostly based on existential ideas. These works portrayed a pessimistic view on life, reality, humanity and several ideologies. Moreover, Absurdist playwrights also experimented with the structure of the play while relating the form with plot.

In the process, they moved beyond traditional structures of the play, which is also seen in the case of Albee. *Zoo Story* does not follow the traditional exposition-crisis-climax-resolution structure, rather it builds up in a non-linear process. Although Albee European playwrights have similarities in terms of structure and ideas, Albee's plays differ from the latter on many levels. One of the major differences in this case is that Albee's plays not only show an existentialist view, they also criticize American social systems. By targeting artificial values of life, materialistic livelihood, lack of communication, distinction between reality and illusion, his plays are constructed in a manner that brings out the raw nature of human emotion, their innermost- psychological struggles and conflicts. Commenting on his own works in his interview with *New York Times*, Albee said, "I find most people spend too much time living as if they're never going to die"⁴ (Weber). This idea is explored to a greater extent in *Zoo Story*.

1.2 Overview of *The Zoo Story*

While describing the play in an article, Philip C. Kolin writes,

Mixing earthy naturalism and alienating, absurdist effects, *The Zoo Story* has received a bewildering variety of interpretations ranging from being seen as a homosexual pass, to an admonition not to talk to strangers in Central Park, a Christian allegory about Peter denying Jerry (Christ) three times, and an attack on fragmentation, isolation, or lack of communication. (Kolin 17-18)

Here, Kolin points out the various points of view from which the play can be explained.

Many critics analyzed the play with its biblical allegories. From Jerry's relevance with Jesus, since he appears to be the savior of Peter, to Jerry's complications due to being a homosexual, the play explores a number of themes. Apart from these, Albee paints a picture

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/17/arts/edward-albee-playwright-of-a-desperate-generation-dies-at-88.html>

of how society imposes power over people, and how it constantly restricts people from living a life of their own choice. *Zoo Story* starts with Jerry saying that he has “been to the zoo” (Albee 1). Although throughout the play, Jerry keeps saying he will tell the story about a zoo, he never does. By the very end of the play, when he is dying, Jerry reveals to Peter that they are in fact in the story, the story he wanted to tell. In other words, Albee uses the title in a reverse chronological order, where Peter and Jerry are already in Jerry’s Zoo story. Moreover, the idea of a zoo also signifies the way the two characters are separated from each other as if they are separated by the bars of a zoo.

The vague yet captivating opening of the play unfolds a series of issues as it progresses. The entire play takes place in New York’s Central Park, in front of a bench. Peter is shown as a routined man with a settled life, and sitting in the park bench on every weekend is another routine work to him. The two characters, Peter and Jerry are woven as binary opposites, to portray two opposite pictures of society. Albee describes Peter in *Zoo Story* as “...a man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely. He wears tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses”; where Jerry is “...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” (Albee 1).

However, as the play progresses, we see Jerry saying that he wants to tell what happened at the zoo, where Peter is struggling to understand why a stranger came up to him with such a strange subject. Although their conversation starts with Jerry wanting to tell a story about the zoo, they eventually talk about Peter’s familial life, Jerry’s shabby apartment, his landlady’s monstrous dog, as well as Peter’s repressed feelings about his identity. Although Jerry’s primary intention seems to be making simple conversation with Peter, he delves deeper into Peter’s personal life. Through their conversation, Albee shows that

although these two characters seem different from the outside, they have quite similarities. Like Jerry, Peter is also struggling with his identity, whether to embrace his animalistic side or not. In addition to that, Albee shows that, even though America shows a picture of a happy and prosperous society, people still have to struggle on many levels.

Apart from the absurd conversations and long monologues, Albee includes the theme of homosexuality in the play, where Jerry talks about his failed attempts of making love with anyone more than once. Homosexuality, a topic which was frowned upon in society even at the twentieth century, is also related to Albee's personal life. Moreover, he also draws a line between him and Jerry where he mentions that Peter assumed Jerry to be from Greenwich village, the place where Albee himself lived. However, although he mentions homosexuality in *Zoo Story* through Jerry, it is evident that his sexuality is repressed by society. In addition to that, the theme of repressed sexuality is also present in the first act of the play 'Homelife', where Albee included a long conversation between Peter and his wife Ann about their sexual life. In both plays, repressed sexuality is shown as the way people bind their desires. The clear reference to authoritarian power over peoples' lives also relates it with the idea of power structure and how it is internalized by its victims. In his book *History of Sexuality* (1976), Michel Foucault discusses the way sexuality has been conceptualized by authoritarian power from the Victorian Age. He suggests that, by creating a discourse of sexuality and relating it with the purpose of reproduction, society imposed a norm where heterosexuality is perceived as normal, and any other form as abnormal. In Albee's play, he also shows how Jerry's homosexuality is another factor behind him being an outcast of society. Also, in the first act, Homelife, Peter and Ann's sexual desires are also restricted in an invisible fear of power. The main objective of this paper is to analyze the interiorization of power present in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*, while focusing on its effects on human sexuality and identity.

Research questions:

This paper will mainly focus on-

- Albee's criticism on the societal constructions of American modern society
- How interiorization of power represses Jerry's sexuality
- How social construction affected Ann and Peter's relationship
- How Michel Foucault's ideas are reflected in Albee's play

Chapter 2

Literature Review

When Albee wrote *Zoo Story* in 1958, American theater witnessed a new playwright emerging whose one act, brief plays challenged the very notion of American materialistic society. Critics such as Harold Clurman and Martin Esslin have also reflected on Albee's contribution to postmodern American theater. In his essay titled "Albee's early one-act plays: A new American playwright from whom much is to be expected," Philip C. Kolin discusses the emergence of Albee as a playwright and why his short plays were highly celebrated during the mid-20th century, even though he was a completely new face. However, one of the many reasons behind the celebration of Albee's works is his unique and celebratory storytelling techniques. From juxtaposing real and unreal realities to breaking the fourth wall by making his characters connect with the audiences. *Edward Albee as Theatrical and Dramatic Innovator* by David A. Crespy and Lincoln Konkle explore the ways in which Albee captivates the audience with words and stories while bringing out the other side of social constructions and norms. In addition, Albee's use of binary opposite characters makes the plays even more appealing. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter is a middle-aged upper-middle class man; and on the other, there is Jerry, a lower class 'outcast' living in the post-war prosperous American society. Through Peter, Albee portrays the regular American middle-class man who leads his life 'perfectly'⁵ that is, quite according to how society wants him to. As his opposite, Jerry is an outcast who does not fit in the socially constructed rules, and is far away from a 'perfect' life as Peter's. In his paper "Chasing a Myth: The Formulation of American Identity in the Plays of Edward Albee," James Frederick Kittredge delves deep into these

⁵ In the play, Peter lives the life of a regular middle-class American. A person with a decent job, a small family, a small apartment, just how society portrays a picture of a 'perfect' life.

oppositional aspects of the play to demonstrate how Albee shows the horrifying image of American societal consumerism in all its ugliness. Throughout his career, Albee was quite open for discussions about his works and took part in numerous interviews over the years. In 1963, Albee sat with Journalist and book critic Digby Diehl to discuss his previous and upcoming works. By that time, he had already published five successful plays. Albee's plays were like an emotional voyage to his audience. With his words and actions, Albee projected the most crucial points of societal constructions. The way his characters use harsh language, and their actions is often unsettling for the live audience to watch. He mentioned about the stage production of his plays in another interview with Stan Sanvel Rubin, Adam Lazarre and Mark Anderson. The conversation which took place in 1981, and was documented as "Living on the Precipice: A Conversation with Edward Albee," contains his views on freedom in a capitalistic world. In the interview, Albee also discusses how societal constructions influence people to perceive a certain way of living as normal. However, *The Zoo Story* was Albee's first play, and he himself stated how writing it taught him to use his plot and characters more clearly in order to portray a certain theme. In a 2013 conference discussion with David Crespy and Lincoln Konkle, Edward Albee discussed the importance of holding the mirror in front of his audience, the importance of showing them who they truly are. He also mentioned that the characters, their features in his plays are all 'real' people. *The Zoo Story* shows how people live and mold their perceptions and life according to society's needs. A major topic in this case is the idea of sexual identity. In *The Zoo Story*, and in its first act 'Homelife', the three major characters, Peter, Jerry and Ann are seen to have problems with their sexuality, and also with accepting their identity. However, in an interview with Kamal Bhasin in 1994, Edward Albee reflected on his ideas about this topic. The interview, documented as "Women, Identity and Sexuality: An Interview with Edward Albee" talks about characters from his other plays as well. In Albee's plays, female characters usually play major roles. In the first

act of *Zoo Story*, Peter's wife Ann plays the role of a catalyst who helps Peter see the delusional life he is living.

As mentioned, *The Zoo Story* is constructed with unique tools through which Albee was able to present a vast range of ideas in a short⁶ play. The play is rich with symbolism and this further specifies the distinction between Jerry and Peter. Rose A. Zimbardo in "Symbolism and Naturalism in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*" discusses this feature of the play. Moreover, in her article "Child's Play: Games in *The Zoo Story*," Cynthia Thomiszer reflects on the significance of the childlike games played by the characters used in the play. For instance, while communicating with children, adults often tell various stories; in this case, Jerry uses the same technique with Peter. The games might seem shallow and simplistic and are presented in a manner that brings Peter in an unsettling position where he is persuaded to see the truth, much like how Albee persuaded his audiences. Additionally, Carol A. Sykes in "Albee's Beast Fables: *The Zoo Story* and *A Delicate Balance*," discusses how Jerry uses the story of 'Jerry and the Dog' on Peter. The longest and most absurd part of the play is when Jerry tells the story of his landlady's dog. From the beginning of the play, Jerry tries to start a conversation with Peter, to make a connection with him. However, he also attempts to do this with his landlady's dog. Unfortunately, each time Jerry approaches the dog, it tries to attack him (Albee 8). Even after trying several times, Jerry could not make a connection with the dog, just like he is unable to do that with humans. Like the second act, Albee kept the persuasive feature in the first act of the play as well. In his article "Traffic of Our Stage: Albee's Peter and Jerry" Normand Berlin draws thematic parallels between the two acts and how they both are intertwined; also showing how Peter's wife Ann takes the place of Jerry in the first act. Both of the acts start with Peter quietly reading and the other character, Jerry or Ann making the first move to start a conversation. In the second act, Jerry

⁶ The length of *Zoo Story* is more or less half an hour (30 minutes).

becomes a mirror to Peter, while reflecting on the lies he has been living his whole life.

Similar to Jerry, Ann in the first act takes his place and proceeds to question Peter what is the result of living like civil people; just as Jerry asks him what is his gain apart from being a regular middle-class man.

Apart from being rich in symbolism and unique characters, *Zoo Story* upholds reality in an unsettling manner. Leonard G. Heldreth in "From Reality to Fantasy: Displacement and Death in Albee's *Zoo Story* " writes about the way Albee unveils reality through Jerry, an outcast. By looking at their surroundings through Jerry's eyes, he shows the delusional world Peter was living in. Moreover, he also analyzes the character progression along with the seemingly absurd storyline and why it ends with Jerry's suicide. Similarly, Nelvin Vos discusses the possible reasons behind Jerry's suicide in "The Process of Dying in the Plays of Edward Albee." He mentions how Jerry acts as a savior to Peter by giving his own life.

In their article "Illusion and Reality in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*," Hossein Aliakbari Harehdasht, Leila Hajjari and Zahra Sheikhi also explore the very last incident of the play, Jerry's tragic death. They also discuss the world of illusion Peter creates to uphold his 'not so perfect' identity as the 'perfect' one. By structuring his life in accordance with how society wants it to be, Peter makes peace with the very shattering illusive way of living; and Jerry acts as an eye opener for him. In the process of leading a conventional and structural life, Peter loses his truest nature, his own identity, his animalistic self. The idea of lost identity is also explored by Kadhim Hatem Kaibr and Dr. Guo Jingjing in their article "Search for Self in Albee's *The Zoo Story*." They mention the class distinction between the two major characters, and the power struggle between them. However, in order to explain the power structure shown in the play and how it affects a person's identity-sexuality-consciousness, Michel Foucault's idea on power and discourse becomes imperative. In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Foucault documents how power

is constructed in order to limit people from their choices. He also discusses that power is not something which is forced upon, rather it is interiorized and that is the way it spreads in society. For this paper, ‘chapter 5: Two Lectures’ and ‘chapter 8: The Eye of Power’ will be used, where Foucault’s arguments on power structure and its use in society are stated. To elaborate on Foucault’s idea of discourse and counter-discourse, P. M. Sigrid and L. S. Renaux in “The Opposing Forces in Albee’s Story” put the two major characters in two oppositional standpoints through which the intensity of the struggle is shown. In the play, this idea of a greater power is also associated with the life choices of the characters, especially with their sexual preferences. In “Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*: Echo/es of Contemporary Subversive Culture,” Naqibun Nabi and Firoz Ahmed shed light on how socially constructed ideas shaped the sexual life of the characters. In addition, Dr. Shuchi Agrawal in “Gender, Sexuality and Power Relations in Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*” elaborates on this by drawing parallels with Jerry’s choice of denouncing conventional social systems while being an outcast himself. Moreover, Parisa Shams and Farideh Pourgiv in their paper “Power Struggle in *The Zoo Story*: A Performance of Subjectivity” discusses the repressed sexuality of Jerry present in the play.

In his highly quoted book *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Michel Foucault traces the history and construction of the idea of sexuality, and how this has been used as a weapon against people. From the early 17th century, authoritarian power constructed a discourse of sexuality under which, heterosexual relationships were labelled as normal, and others as abnormal. The act of sex, which is a basic human need has been caged in the term ‘sexuality’, while making it a discourse and another form of identity. In his book, Foucault uses the term ‘repressed hypotheses’ to show how human need and desire have been conceptualized in western materialistic society. How society changes and controls its civilians has also been discussed in Amy Allen’s article “The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the

Death of the Subject.” She points out how power does not directly repress sexuality, rather it uses several tools to manipulate people indirectly but effectively. Similar to this, T. J. Berard in his paper “Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, and the Reformulation of Social Theory,” elaborates on Foucault’s ideas of ‘interiorization’ and how power moves in a circular motion in society.

Although Foucault pointed out the problems with sexuality in his book, he did not provide any insight on standing against the power or any sense of protest against it. In *Zoo Story*, Albee constructed Jerry’s character who symbolizes the oppositional force against the social orthodox. However, in the play, Peter symbolizes American social constructions. Therefore, through his words and actions, the same social ideologies are reflected. He is also an example of how the power cycle stays alive with people carrying it throughout their life. This is where Foucault’s idea of interiorizing power comes, as he argues that it is the people of society who run the cycle of power. In her article “The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender, and the History of Sexuality,” Carolyn J. Dean discusses why Foucault did not provide such ideas in his writing. Since sexuality and identity are heavily intertwined, Foucault's discourse certainly provides an insight on the formation of the self. Finally, in his article “*The Civilizing Process* and *The History of Sexuality*: Comparing Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault,” Dennis Smith points out how society uses the discourse of ‘sexuality’ as a way of ‘civilizing’ people. Similarly in *Zoo Story*, Peter is seen repeating it with his wife Ann, and later with Jerry. The internalization of the process is what binds Foucault and Albee’s works together.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Sexuality: A Social Construction

The History of Sexuality (1976) is a four-volume study by Michel Foucault that explores how the idea of 'sexuality' emerged and how it is related to power. In the first volume *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault argues how sexual act and choice changed after the emergence of Victorian Bourgeoisie in 19th century Europe. However, Foucault built most of his arguments in the second chapter of the book termed 'Repressive Hypothesis' where he shed light on the very idea of a person being sexually repressed in a society or in a particular time of history. However, all of his examples are European and his ideas too are heavily reliant on Western philosophy and thinking and social construct. According to Foucault, since the rise of bourgeoisie Victorians, the act of sex has been condemned as a waste of energy, and perceived as a functional act for reproduction. He writes, "Sexuality was carefully confined [during the Victorian period]; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction" (Foucault 3). In this case, Foucault is arguing about the influence of capitalism with the rise of bourgeoisie, and the particular capitalist ideology that revolves around the idea of working hard and getting rewarded afterwards. This idea of working and getting rewarded has also been explained by influential German Philosopher Karl Marx. In his 1867 book *Das Kapital* (Capital) volume 1, Marx states,

...rising bourgeoisie needs the power of the state, and uses it to 'regulate' wages...to force them (working class) into the limits suitable for making a profit, to lengthen the working day, and to keep the worker himself at his

normal level of dependence. This is an essential aspect of so-called primitive accumulation.⁷ (Marx 899-900)

The human-like machines society produces are made to believe nothing but that, sex is a matter of reproduction, and not pleasure or choice. As a result, sexual act has been repressed and confined as reproductive purposes. Thus, according to Foucault, human beings can achieve liberation if they talk openly about sex as well as ‘enjoy’ it as an act.

In other words, Foucault’s repressive hypothesis is a hypothesis about the relationship between sexual liberation and repression led by power. This idea is closely related to his arguments about the construction of power in his book *Power/Knowledge*. In the first part (first lecture) of chapter 5 of this book, Foucault writes, “...the mechanisms of power are those of repression. The other argues that the basis of the relationship of power lies in the hostile engagement of forces” (Foucault 91). In this case, power is used upon people to stay in line. In other words, power is used to keep people in the ‘normative’ structure of sex, which is related to reproduction, not desire. In Edward Albee’s *Zoo Story*, this same tactic is shown in a subtle manner. When Jerry states that he is a homosexual, Peter tells him that if he follows socially determined rules and marry a woman, he might solve his ‘problem’ (Albee 6).

According to Foucault, repression of sex in the Western world has had a paradoxical effect. The forced repression of sexuality by authoritarian power has led to the intense scrutiny of it by that very repressive society. In other words, socially imposed secrecy on human sexuality has turned sexuality into something that is always being ‘confessed’ and not ‘experienced’. For example, Foucault mentions diagnosing women as hysterics during the 19th century; punishing children's sexual behavior during 19th century; pathologizing ‘non-

⁷ In ‘The Secret of Primitive Accumulation’, chapter 26 of his book *Das Kapital*, Marx argues about the privatization of production. According to him, capitalists make money through the labor of working-class people, and in return, the working-class gets nothing. In fact, they get even more dependent on the people [capitalists] who exploits them.

normative' sexualities during 19th century. To elaborate on the effects of 'confession', Foucault writes, "Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse" (Foucault 21). Here, Foucault is referring to how Catholic church during the 18th century normalized confessions, and since church was a powerful entity at that time, it shows how power normalizes confessing something which does to abide by its law. However, Foucault's argument on 'repressive power' and 'normalizing power' can be discussed broadly in this case.. In the chapter 'Repressive Hypothesis', he writes, "In the eighteenth century, sex became 'police' matter-in the full and strict sense given the term at the time: not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces" (Foucault 24-25). However, this idea of 'normalizing power' is even more elaborately discussed in his conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot about the gaze of power and interiorization of it in 1980. Foucault states that the sense of power heavily relied on critical surveillance. According to him, knowledge is influenced by power. People who are in the ruling class have the power while deciding what gets to be known and what does not get to be known, therefore creating a discourse. However, since discourse is created and molded in such a way that the mass can be manipulated, authorities need to control their every move and action. As a result, controlling or 'gazing' upon people became another form of forcing power.

While exploring how people in power control others, Foucault studied the architectural structures of different institutions. For instance, if the idea of a prison is taken into account, one can see the similarities in how these are structured. Almost all the prisons in Europe during Foucault's time contained at least one watch tower. Now, it is not necessary that there will always be someone in that tower watching the inmates, but the idea of someone being there is what makes prisoners control and police their own behavior. Foucault says, "...there was a central observation-point which served as the focus of the exercise of

power and, simultaneously, for the registration of knowledge” (Foucault 148). To elaborate the gaze of power Foucault uses the idea of ‘Panopticon’⁸ coined by Jeremy Bentham.

Foucault says, the Panopticon is,

A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the center of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening onto the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening onto the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. (Foucault 147)

With the cells facing the watchtower and opening windows, the inmates are always under control, since they feel the gaze of the authorities.

3.2 The Interiorization of Power

However, Foucault also mentions that, people in power tighten their control in a certain manner and in a very strategic way. In reality, if the grip is forced directly on the people, there is a heavy chance of riots and opposition force against it. Therefore, to keep enforcing power, authorities use the weapon of interiorization. While defining power, Foucault says, “...power is essentially that which represses. Power represses nature, the instincts, a class, individuals” (Foucault 90). The crucial fact in these cases is that repression cannot be forced upon directly. This is exactly where the idea of interiorizing the ‘gaze’ comes. To implement this control even more, authorities and social powers have created several discourses such as norms, morality etc. to show people a way of living and to show them what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’. However, their idea of right and wrong might differ from that of others, and Michel Foucault has thoroughly discussed this idea of right and

⁸ In the 18th century, English Philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham designed a prison that followed the model of a panopticon.

wrong. By creating a moral structure and binary oppositions, powerful authorities control the mass all at once. Moreover, with the globalization of ideologies and discourses along with the advancement of technology, people all over the world follow the path on their own, thus interiorizing the 'gaze' of power without even knowing.

One contemporary example of interiorizing the 'gaze' can be the use of social media. Right after capitalism engulfed society and with the emergence of technology, people were more connected and this further resulted in the spreading of discourses created by power authorities. In today's world, most peoples' lives are open on public platforms, from sharing their pictures to their travel locations to their job positions; everything is just one click away. It is because of this 'public life', people tend to mold them in a particular way since they are being 'watched' all the time. Certainly, this allows the powerful party to control one even more. Through this, people are not only controlling themselves in a particular manner, but also trying to control others who might be different to them. In *Zoo Story*, Peter plays the part of a representative of social ideologies. His thoughts about leading a normal life as a middle-class American fall into the mold society has created. Even during the conversation with his wife, Peter repeats the fact that they are not 'animals', rather, their life is well furnished since they lead a life in accordance with social constructions. Through this gaze, the central power does not have to control the vast mass, rather through the hegemonic influence of the discourses, they do it themselves. Therefore, normalizing power is far more insidious. In this way, power that seeps into one's unconscious. The very power that influences one to have certain beliefs and desires; like the desire to get married, to produce offspring, to have a heterosexual partner. It is still considered power because it influences one in a far more insidious and subtle manner.

One of the major arguments that Foucault upholds throughout *History of Sexuality* is the idea that, normalizing power took 'sex', which is merely a human activity, and molded it into a 'discourse of sexuality'. He defines sexuality as,

...the correlative of that slowly developed discursive practice which constitutes the *scientia sexualis*. The essential features of this sexuality are not the expression of a representation that is more or less distorted by ideology, or of a misunderstanding caused by taboos; they correspond to the functional requirements of a discourse that must produce its truth. (Foucault 68)

He also clarifies that, "Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover" (Foucault 105). Although it is being titled as 'repressed sexuality', the term 'sexuality' should not be thought of as something divine, rather something which is constructed by power to control individuals of society. Moreover, through this construction, one starts to codify sexual act between opposite sexes as 'normal' while keeping all the other kind of sexual acts as 'abnormal'. Therefore, it does not stay as an act, rather it becomes an idea where people start to attach sexuality tied to identity with it. Thus, someone's sexual choice defines who they are as a person, for instance: a homosexual or a heterosexual. Before 18th century, a person who used to engage in same-sex activity used to be a sinner of sodomy, but during the 18th and 19th centuries that person became a 'homosexual'. Therefore, for Foucault, sexuality was not only policed in the 19th century, but it's that the kind of policing that started to construct identities associated with it, an identity that was sinful in some sense.

Foucault also writes,

...nearly one hundred and fifty years have gone into the making of a complex machinery for producing true discourses on sex: a deployment that spans a wide segment of history in that it connects the ancient injunction of confession

to clinical listening methods. It is this deployment that enables something called "sexuality" to embody the truth of sex and its pleasures. (Foucault 68)

Therefore, the main aim of Foucault can be summarized in one line, he wanted to separate the act of sex from sexuality, a discourse. If we can start to look at the way we hold certain things as 'natural', we can understand that they are not exactly so. In this case, our sexuality is not in fact natural. Rather, it is a socially constructed discourse. Therefore, sexuality can be understood through layers of social discourse.

Chapter 4

Peter and Jerry: Two Ends of a Pole

4.1 Peter as a discourse; Jerry as a counter-discourse

As mentioned previously, Edward Albee grew up with adoptive parents, and his relationship with them was not that well, and this experience certainly affected his writings.

Stephen Bottoms in his article titled 'Introduction: the man who had three lives' writes,

Drawing on the relative poverty of his own life at the time, and on his experiences while working in "the city of people" as a Western Union telegram delivery boy, Albee created the menacing, world-weary, but highly articulate character of Jerry, to give unfettered expression to his sharply critical view of the conventional, bourgeois world embodied by Peter.

(Bottoms 3)

From the stage direction given at the beginning of the play, Jerry and Peter's differences are clearly stated. On the surface level, Jerry is a man who is in his late thirties, dressed carelessly, wandering in the park. However, a 'normal' American of his age should not be doing that on a Sunday afternoon. A normal American of his age needs to be a careful and enthusiastic young soul who is careful about his whereabouts, but Albee's Jerry is constructed in a total opposite manner of that. On the other hand, there is Peter, a middle-aged man in his early forties, an employed person, a family man- like every 'normal' American should. By drawing these differences, Albee clearly points out that his two characters are going to show conflicting images of the society. In his article 'Albee's early one act plays', Philip C Kolin writes, "*The Zoo Story* creates a dialectic through the seemingly polar opposites of character, geography, fictionalities, and even props – Jerry

versus Peter; the rooming-house versus Central Park; animal versus man; freedom versus imprisonment; conformity versus confrontation” (Kolin 18).

In his 1970 lecture ‘The Order of Discourse’, Michel Foucault discussed how forming or constructing a discourse is linked to social power. In the afterword of his book *Power/Knowledge* this is mentioned by saying, “Discourses not only exhibit immanent principles of regularity, they are also bound by regulations enforced through social practices of appropriation, control and ‘policing’. Discourse is a political commodity” (Foucault 245). In other words, discourse is not the truth or reality, rather it is a politically constructed concept which people are made to follow. In this sense, the idea of having a nine-to-five job and maintaining a family life with kids and being conventionally ‘civil’ is nothing but merely a false portrayal of an ideal life. As the play progresses, Jerry and Peter’s conversation turns more into Jerry interrogating the other one.

Jerry: You're married!

Peter: [with pleased emphasis] Why, certainly.

Jerry: It isn't a law, for God's sake. (Albee 2)

In this little snippet, Jerry questions the norm of a person getting married and having kids, a convention structured by society. This idea is also related with controlling sexual choices and limiting it to only for the reproduction of offspring. In a 1981 interview with Sanvel Rubin, Adam Lazarre and Mark Anderson, Edward Albee discussed the idea of power grasping an individual’s mind wholly. He says, “I used to think it was man's nature to live in a society where he can govern himself, but the more I think of it, the more pessimistic I become; it may well be man's nature to wish to live in a totalitarian society, to be governed. We may be at an evolutionary turning point” (Anderson and Ingersoll 3). In other words, humans are now drawn to the idea of power to the extent that they cannot distinguish it as a problem; rather they become the ones who want to be governed. In *Zoo Story*, Peter is the one representing

the submissive group of people and Jerry is the one fighting against it. To elaborate on the opposition of the characters even more, Albee directly questions their class distinctions.

Jerry: What is the dividing line between upper-middle-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class? (Albee 4)

Although Peter belongs to the middle class of society and Jerry clearly belongs to the lower class, he asks this question about distinctive middle classes to place Peter in an uncomfortable position, to show him the effects of capitalism more clearly. In the same interview mentioned before, Albee said, "...it is the writer's function to educate, to inform, to hold a mirror up to people (Mark Anderson and Earl Ingersoll 4). He also adds that, if a mirror is held up to someone's face, they get uncomfortable seeing their own self, which is the case with Peter in the play. Jerry came as a mirror who voluntarily made him realize the problematic ideas surrounding him.

Another case that Albee strongly shed light in the play is the lack of communication in modern society. In the same interview as before, he states,

And other people's refusal to communicate with one another, which I sometimes think is probably much closer to the problem--not that people can't communicate with each other, but that they choose not to, because it's easier and safer not to. Not enough people are willing to live on the precipice. And if you're a writer, I guess you should concern yourself with the precision of language. (Mark Anderson and Earl Ingersoll 2)

This idea of people not wanting to talk to anyone is also related to the machine-like beings they are in the materialistic world, where people care for their personal benefits, progress and stay away from connecting with others.

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? (Albee 3)

Here, it is clear that Peter perceives talking to a stranger as a kind of ‘experiment’, as if he is being experimented like a guinea pig. However, the loss of communication is also seen in the part where Jerry explains his poor living condition to Peter, and Peter, without any thought, asks why he lives there. It is as if his lack of connection made him a person who thinks that all parts of society are equal, just the way authority wants people to think. In an interview with Digby Diehl, Albee states, “One of the troubles with the audience is that they concern themselves with the residue of things. They concern themselves, for example, with pity rather than compassion- they concern themselves with sentimentality rather than with sentiment” (Diehl 59). However, the idea that Peter and Jerry are two oppositional forces is also being discussed by James Frederick Kittredge. In his paper, he describes Peter as the, “...symbol of the American bourgeoisie: a man, average in every way, whose life could have been ripped from the pages of a magazine” (Kittredge 39). On the other hand,

Jerry’s attitude about American life is characterized by imagery of confinement. From the discussion of his hive-like rooming house to his story about the play’s titular zoo, Jerry paints a picture of a society in which people are trapped and separated from one another by socio-economic and interpersonal barriers. The zoo, in fact, provides the ultimate symbolic model for human (non)interaction. (Kittredge 40-41)

However, apart from the characters, the setting and stage production of the play is also constructed in an oppositional manner. Albee uses the even number two throughout the play

while keeping the oppositional image. First of all, there are two benches in the park; then comes two interrelated settings: Jerry's room- Peter's apartment; Jerry's murder taking place in front of a peaceful afternoon scenario of the park. P. M. Sigrid and L. S. Renaux in their article writes, "This mirror-like setting is so peaceful, with its trees, foliage and sky in the background, that it does not match the words and murder that occur in the play" (Sigrid and Renaux 184). Moreover, as seen in the play, in Peter's apartment, everything lives in pairs: he has two daughters, they have two parakeets, two cats, two televisions. The idea of two here resembles companionship. On the other hand, Jerry lives alone in a shabby room and has not seen most of his flat mates ever, which shows isolation and barrenness, another side of society. Sigrid and Renaux also state, "Jerry's underworld setting is like the dark and distorted image one sees in a hellish mirror, while Peter in his apartment never really leaves the higher-middle-class he lives in" (Sigrid and Renaux 186). The play is quite minimalistic, with just two benches, two characters and some props. Which is another major reason behind its numerous productions. David Crespy writes, "Because Albee spent much of his time observing and supporting artists of all kinds, he knew that creative spirits needed space and privacy to do their work, and thus he always gave his directors and designers room and space to explore"; and this also led to multiple ways people perceived the play (Crespy 18).

4.2 Cycle of Power, from Peter to Jerry

In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault states, "Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit (Foucault 93). In other words, the cycle of power is not something that is directly forced upon people, rather, it is institutionalized and practiced. Certainly, if a person practices something from an early age, they become a medium of that same power flowing to another. Here in this play, Peter is the medium of that power-flow. Rose A. Zimbardo in her article

writes, “Peter is the modern version, in middle-class stereotype, of Everyman. He reads the "right" books, lives on the right" side of the park, has the average number of children, and the "right" Madison Avenue job” (Zimbardo 10-11). Here, being ‘right’ means being in the periphery of modern social structure. However, at the beginning of the play, when Jerry asks him about his children and if he has any boys, Peter says,

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?

(Albee 2-3)

When Peter said “naturally, every man wants a son,” he is repeating what society has ‘normalized’ as a notion. Having a boy rather than a girl, is seen to be prosperous for the family, as men are ‘supposed to’ be the breadwinners. This patriarchal norm certainly affects people deeply and as a result, wanting a boy child over a girl seems to be normal. In his book, Foucault also talked about normalization of power. He says, “I believe that all this can explain the global functioning of what I would call a society of normalization. I mean, more precisely, that disciplinary normalizations come into ever greater conflict with the juridical systems of sovereignty” (Foucault 109).

However, the play not only shows how power relation works, but also how gruesome and violent it can be. As their conversation progresses, Jerry tells Peter the story of his landlady’s dog, “...a black monster of a beast: an oversized head, tiny, tiny ears, and eyes ... bloodshot, infected, maybe; and a body one can see the ribs through the skin” (Albee 8). Although at first, Jerry and the dog’s relationship is shown to be a fight for territory, it has other meanings as well. Carol A. Sykes writes,

When Jerry enters at the beginning of the play, repeating three times, “I’ve been to the zoo,” he is saying he has experienced this world, contemporary America...he has been to the zoo, indeed...while the first part of the play defines the problem, the second part, the dog story, suggests how Jerry should react to it. (Sykes 449)

Many critics have concluded that it was Jerry’s failed attempt to make contact with anybody or anything. Moreover, it can also be seen as a use of power over the dog. When he sees that he cannot make a connection with the dog (or keep him on his side), he decides to kill it; similar to what authority does to people if they go beyond the expected norms. It is, however, a bit different with humans. In his book, Michel Foucault writes, “Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns...power is dissociated from individual might” (Foucault 156). This idea of power being embedded into our psyche is what happens to Peter. In addition to that, Jerry’s 3-page long monologue is also the most bewildering part of the whole act which is bound to make the audience stunned. Regarding this, Normand Berlin in his article writes,

Albee, like the European Absurdist, wants his audience to face reality in all its senselessness and to accept that reality without illusions...In *The Zoo Story* Albee gives an American slant to European absurdism, performing the role of ‘demonic social critic’. (Berlin 770)

Even Albee himself once stated the fact that a writer’s job needs to be that of a critic. He says, “I am not sure that it is the responsibility of a writer to give answers, especially to questions that have no answers- the responsibility of a writer is to be a sort of demonic social critic- to present the world and people in it as he sees it” (Anderson and Ingersoll 72).

By the end of the play, power struggle is more visibly shown with Peter and Jerry's fight for the park bench.

Jerry: I said I want this bench, and I'm going to have it Now get over there.

Peter: People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything. (Albee 13)

Here, by uttering people not having everything "a rule," Peter is repeating the same capitalistic societal norm his mind is woven with. Although, at the beginning, Peter seemed to be the normal American guy, without major problems like Jerry, he too is a victim of the system. Cynthia Thomiszer writes, "Peter humors Jerry, but this perfunctory social response quickly shifts as Peter reveals that he is lonely, too, and needs a companion" (Thomiszer 56). However, the play ends with Jerry's murder or suicide in front of that park bench. Although it has some biblical connotation; that Jerry's sacrifice was the driving force of Peter's realization, it is strongly related with power. Parisa Shams and Farideh Pourgivi writes in their paper,

To this end, thus, Jerry has to submit to power in order to get an identity. This is why he commits his self-murder in the hands of Peter, the representative of power as one who has assimilated into the power structure of the society. Peter's being a symbol of power becomes more palpable as he holds the knife in the fight with Jerry. This is when Jerry throws himself on the knife and symbolically submits to the knife, to Peter, to the power that has subordinated him. (Shams and Pourgivi 6)

Chapter 5

Interiorization of Power leading to repressed sexuality

5. 1 Jerry: A h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l

As mentioned in the third chapter, constructing ‘sexuality’ finally led to the idea of determining one’s identity, and this is present in *Zoo Story* as well. Foucault says, “Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (Foucault 43). In the middle of their conversation in Albee’s play, Jerry states that he is a homosexual in a tone that suggests that, he does not want to express it to the outer world.

Jerry: I've never been able to have sex with, or...make love to anybody more than once. Once; that's it ... Oh, wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen...I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l...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? (Albee 6)

This piece of information Jerry gives about himself certainly holds a number of meanings. Firstly, not being able to ‘make love’ to women shows that he tried and wanted to fit in the social category, but could not due to his true being. Michel Foucault writes, “there is no escaping from power, that it is always-already present, constituting that very thing which one attempts to counter it with” (Foucault 82). Being a homosexual and lower-class person, Jerry was bound to be an outcast of society, and “If he tries to challenge the paradigms of hierarchy, he is considered an invader to the peace, quietness and qualm of upper-class section of society” (Agrawal 11).

Parisa Shams and Farideh Pourgivi write in their paper, “As Jerry gives Peter an account of his life, it becomes evident that he has been a victim of the normative discourses of his society. Jerry’s homosexuality in the story suggests that he tries to defy power structures which maintain the gender regime” (Shams and Pourgivi 3). Also, the fact that he sees women only for an hour again shows that his interaction with them is based on his carnal needs, nothing more than that. Then again, being a homosexual and seeing no option but to have sex with a person opposite gender is quite tormenting for Jerry, which is seen in his speech. He says,

Jerry: 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. (Albee 6)

This idea of sexuality being embedded with one’s identity is also being mentioned by Albee. In one of his interviews with Kamal Bhasin, he says,

I suppose one’s sexuality is a part of one’s identity. One’s position in one’s society which differentiates us from the society-the economic, the social, the political, moral mores of the society that determine or undermine all this. But all of these things affect the individual, and since no two people are the same, everybody’s reaction to all of these outside forces are slightly different. (Albee 25)

In the play, Peter, the ‘normal’ American’s reaction to Jerry’s sexuality also shows how societal power turns a very inherent nature of human into something which is a mere concept. In this case, Peter almost suggests Jerry to marry or have relation with a woman in order to ‘solve his problem’.

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. (Albee 6)

However, during this part of the conversation, Jerry also mentions that his source of fulfilling sexual needs are pornographic playing cards. This point also portrays how sex is used as a tool of increasing customers in capitalist society, in this case, American society.

Peter: I didn't need anything like that when I got older.

Jerry: 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 real experience as a substitute for the fantasy. (Albee 6)

Here, Peter saying that he “did not need anything like that when he got older” also shows how society acts with the outcasts. Regarding this, Leonard G. Heldreth writes in his article that,

His [Jerry] statement criticizes a world that cannot live up to his fantasy expectations and indicates a desire for another relationship as valid as that with the Greek boy. His later sexual relationships seem to be merely experiences through which he can recapture, in fantasy, the ecstasy of this earlier love. (Heldreth 23)

Moreover, Firoz Ahmed and Naqibun Nabi mention, “for both Albee and Jerry, this heterosexual world only sees other orientations of sexual desires of an individual as a ‘pervert’ or ‘savage’ activity, and tries to give a sense of ‘shame’ to its very own citizens, if

their choice of determining their own sex and sexuality are not matched with the predefined social sexual behavior” (Ahmed and Nabi 238).

In addition to that, one of the major effects of repressed sexuality is seen in the last scene of the play. While fighting about the park bench, Jerry pulls out a knife and drives Peter to attack him with it. Although at first, he tried to snatch away Peter’s territory from him, later he himself turned into a machine that upheld societal expectations on Peter, which he is afraid of.

Jerry: You fight, you miserable bastard; fight for that bench; fight for your parakeets; fight for your cats; fight for your two daughters; fight for your wife; fight for your manhood, you pathetic little vegetable.
[Spits in Peter's face] You couldn't even get your wife with a male child. (Albee 14)

Jerry’s statement here shows how society normalizes power in controlling one’s desires, choices by guilt tripping them. Regarding this, Foucault writes, “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault 86). When Peter picks up the knife Jerry threw in front of him, Jerry leans towards him, pushing the knife inside of his body. The tragic and sudden murder or suicide reveals another part of Peter he did not know existed. Nathan Hedman writes,

Jerry’s final murder/suicide there is nevertheless a brief, epiphanic glimpse of the possibility of connection, even if just a split-second “understanding” between two creatures in a zoo. The knife having punctured his chest, Jerry delivers a dizzying array of insights, most of them opaque, but nevertheless bearing the marks of an epiphany of an ulterior reality. (Hedman 111)

Moreover, the death of Jerry also sheds light on two major issues Albee wanted his audience or readers to get. Firstly, through death, Jerry connected himself with Peter, opening another dimension of communication. Nelvin Vos in his article writes, “At the cost of his own life, Jerry causes Peter to become aware of man’s universal animality in order to rescue Peter’s humanity” (Vos 83). Therefore, by killing himself, Jerry achieved his goal to make a connection with someone. Secondly, “...this tragic scene, represents a point of contact for Jerry and a point of separation for Peter (Kaibr and Jingjing 106). However, to many critics, Jerry’s murder connected Peter and him sexually. Normand Berlin writes, “In *The Zoo Story*, the sexual act is clearly homosexual. At the same time, it is a suicidal act, with Jerry, at first in agony from his stab wound and screaming like a “wounded animal,” finally welcoming a death for which he is thankful” (Berlin 776). It is undeniable that, whether sexual or suicidal, Jerry became a tool for Peter’s realization; in other words, he became a tool that portrayed the problematic societal constructions.

5.2 Ann and Peter: Limiting sexual desire in the name of being ‘civil’

After more than four decades of *Zoo Story*, Albee included a first act to the play termed ‘Homelife’. In an interview with David Crespy and Lincoln Konkle, Edward Albee says,

I thought *The Zoo Story* was pretty good for a first play, and I still think it’s a pretty good play. I was aware by the time I had finished writing it that I had written a play about one and a half characters. Jerry is a three-dimensional person. Peter was not fleshed out sufficiently to be a fully dimensional character. (Crespy and Konkle 14)

Homelife shows the events before Peter went to the park for reading, and it brings out some major points which shows why he wanted to be indifferent to Jerry. The act starts with Peter

and his wife Ann, where Ann suggests that they need to talk; much like how Jerry wanted to talk to Peter. However, as the play progresses, Ann's concern with her body and her marriage to Peter being a representation of 'perfect' couple is brought upon. Clearly, she wants their relationship to be versatile and full of excitement, not something which is merely two people living for the sake of their relationship. In her conversation, Ann brings up the fact that they repress their animality in the name of being civil.

Ann: When we come together in bed and I know we are going to 'make love,' I know it is going to be two people who love each other giving quiet, orderly, predictable, deeply pleasurable joy. But where is the rage? We are animals! Why don't we behave like that? Is it that we love each other too safely? That we are secure? That we are too civilized? (Albee 19)

Albee's choice of words here reflects Michel Foucault's idea. "There is no need for arms, physical violence, or material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself," Foucault writes in *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 155). Ann using the words 'orderly', 'predictable', 'civilized' shows that the way they show physical intimacy is also under an invisible lens of societal powers. Moreover, Amy Allen writes, "Power does not function in the domain of sexuality merely or even primarily by repressing, prohibiting, censoring, and restricting; it incites, produces, provokes, and induces; and it prohibits by producing just as it produces by prohibiting" (Allen 123).

Here in this act, Peter stops Ann multiple times so that she does not talk about sex so openly, which is perceived to be a taboo.

Peter: She was playing with my...

Ann: Your ear? Your toe?

Peter: No; my...

Ann: Your penis! (Fairly loud)

Peter: Yes! Shhhhh! Don't! (Albee 20)

Stopping Ann from uttering the name of a body part associated with sexual intercourse is also a connotation of limiting sexual behaviors. Regarding behavioral patterns in relation to Foucault, Dennis Smith writes, "Foucault points out that as the empire became more centralized and bureaucratic this changed the life conditions of Roman citizens and led to alterations in behavioral standards" (Smith 85). Similar to him T. J. Berard also states that, "Foucault is not only concerned that revolutionary or Utopian political movements are unviable, but also that they are potentially repressive" (Berard 218).

In addition, Peter and Ann's conversation also reveals why he prefers to be gentler with Ann. Due to a past experience where he 'hurt' a girl during intercourse, Peter prefers to stay away from being 'hard or animalistic' with Ann, as opposed to what she wants, a little "chaos and madness" (Albee 23). In other words, Peter is creating a world combining his comfort zones, so that he does not need to face the complications unleashed. He is living in an invisible bubble that is shaped in accordance with societal norms. Hossein Aliakbari Harehdasht, Leila Hajjari and Zahra Sheikhi Shahidzadeh writes that Peter "desires to build a world of illusion which furnishes an escape from his personal insufficiencies" (Aliakbari et al. 15). However, Albee concludes the play with Peter's sense of realization through Jerry's death. It is his death which reveals that Peter is not a "vegetable", rather, an "animal" himself. However, opposite to Albee, Foucault's repressive hypothesis does not reveal any way of getting out of the cycle. Carolyn J. Dean writes,

Foucault's main counterintuitive argument is thus that derepression does not represent the lifting of taboos but the extension of power, and that any

description of power as well as resistance to it must proceed from the understanding that 'power is everywhere.' (Dean 283)

Since power is an endless loop, and is encapsulated everywhere, living with one's true self is not something which will let that person be out of the umbrella of power. In a world which is run by the ideas and laws constructed by the authoritarian power, living a life based on own choices is nothing but impossible to do.

Conclusion

A play where almost nothing happens until the very end, holds an incredible number of meanings and symbols within it. Although, Edward Albee himself states that *Zoo Story* was like a tutor to him for his later plays, it still brings out the unspoken and unseen part of life, and questions if living in others' light is worth it. With a combination of European absurdism and American modernism, Albee brings out a piece of work that plays with audiences' minds, touching the innermost parts of them. Peter, a middle aged well-off American man, reading peacefully on a park bench is how the play starts. A very regular but creative opening Albee chooses for his play. But it is with the other character, Jerry, that the event starts to unfold in a strange and absurd manner. With Peter and Jerry's conversation, Albee brings out issues of life and death, leading a materialistic life or being an outcast, class differences, lack of communication in modern society, lack of compassion, and finally, limitation of sexual desires.

From the beginning of the play, Albee makes it clear that Jerry is the outcast of society and Peter is the flagbearer of a middle-class American discourse. Throughout their conversation, with every other word, Peter reflects the same societal norms with which he is being controlled; to which he submitted himself. This idea certainly relates with Michel Foucault's argument about the interiorization of power. In his book, Foucault discusses that power spreads like a cycle in society, and this happens in the process of normalization. By creating a discourse of how a middle-class American's life should be, society limited Peter's choices, and even restricted him showing his true identity. Now, Peter is not directly forced, rather he got introduced with a set of concepts about how life should be. As an opposite character, Jerry does not follow the rules and norms society set, and chooses to live life his own way. However, a person who lost his parents and guardian at a very young age and pretty much lived a lonely life, Jerry does not have the liberty to connect with others that way. Which, in a sense, turned out to be good for him, since he lives a life of his own choice.

However, due to his sexual preferences, Jerry is also forced to live a shabby and critical life. In a sense, being alone did not quite save him, rather it resulted in him being an outcast. As their conversation progresses, the play reveals that, even after they belong to different classes, they both are leading a life which is a mask over their true self. Peter lives a life hiding his animalistic side, in the sense of being civil and 'normal'. On the other hand, even after being a homosexual, Jerry sleeps with girls, which can be taken as an attempt to fit in the social system, an attempt to be normal. However, with his bizarre 'zoo story,' Jerry tries to communicate with Peter, but in the process, he opens a hidden part of Peter's identity which he has been repressing over the years.

However, after more than 40 years of the first production of *The Zoo Story*, Albee added a first act to the play titled 'Homelife'. The first act shows the events before Peter's visit to the park. Here, Albee incorporates an almost 45-minute-long conversation of Peter and his wife Ann, where they again bring out issues of being civil and repressing one's own emotion or desires. Although not entirely as absurd as Peter and Jerry's conversation, Ann and Peter's conversation is also bizarre to some extent. Like the second act, the first act also starts off with Ann mentioning that they do not communicate, a claim which has been made by Jerry as well. However, as the play progresses, Ann complains how their sexual relationship does not have any life or excitement in it. During this conversation, she points out whether they limit themselves from acting like animals just to be civil. This idea also relates with Foucault's argument about how power, with its normative discourses, creates an illusion of perfection that people knowingly or unknowingly follow. Ann and Peter's calm and peaceful physical act also relates with Foucault's 'repressive hypothesis.' However, in this case, it is not their sexuality which is being controlled, but how their sexual act circulates.

The Zoo Story can be taken as offering an escapist reality for all three characters. As in an actual zoo, people in society are divided by invisible bars of social powers and repressive discourses that they often forget about the world outside of it, just like Peter did. In the process of following social constructions, he buried his true self and became a whole new shell of a perfect American middle-class man. On the other hand, Jerry, like a ‘hunger artist’⁹, sacrifices himself in order to make Peter realize how power engulfed his humanistic nature. Similar to Franz Kafka’s hunger artist, Jerry is also trapped in a zoo where he is constantly under the monitor of power, just as the hunger artist was. The way he stays alone being an outsider certainly keeps him somewhat safe in a world of circus showman. To conclude with the words of Kafka, “Who knew where they would hide him if he wished to remind them of his existence and, along with that, of the fact that, strictly speaking, he was only an obstacle on the way to menagerie” (Kafka 4).

⁹ Franz Kafka’s short story *A Hunger Artist*, originally published in 1924 is a story of an artist who fasts to make a living. Sitting in a small cage, he starves himself for even forty days sometime. However, the play ends with a tragedy with the hunger artist’s death.

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