

A view from the bridge masculinity

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Examine the ideas of Manliness, Hostility and Aggression in A View from the Bridge. How are these ideas connected? A View from the Bridge: a tragic drama piece, written by Arthur Miller and first published in 1955. Curtained by the never-ending dramatics of the play, is quite basically a fight for an unconditional love, portrayed by a man of whom perplexes his emotions like no other (Eddie Carbone). The play itself is set in the 1950's; times when masculinity and dominance we're vital for a man to obtain, and therefore prove to be key concepts during A View from the Bridge.

Due to the constant battle to be the top of the hierarchy, a hostile atmosphere is continuously present within the circle of male characters. To be the more predominant man proves highly important; it gives them authority over the female characters, and status over the other males. The play has been written as a Greek Tragedy: a storyline of where a certain person is destined for disastrous misfortune (the Hero). Linking to this, is the opening narration spoken by Alfieri. Alfieri is a lawyer, and as he quotes " I am a lawyer ..

We're only thought of in connection with disasters", you are automatically signalled that something bad is bound to happen at some point during A View from the Bridge. Eddie Carbone works as a longshoreman in New York. He lives with his wife Beatrice, and his niece Catherine. Eddie proves to be the protagonist within the first page of A View from the Bridge, of which is chorused by Alfieri (an ageing lawyer). From this, it is rather easy to acknowledge that Eddie is going to play a domineering role, and quite obviously the hero in this Greek Tragedy comparison.

As I have previously mentioned, masculinity is highly important, and particularly important to Eddie. Being the utmost respected and powerful man proves rather essential to him during the play, as gives him domination over the household females. An example of this would be in Act Two, just after Eddie rings the immigration bureau. " Get them out the house... Not tomorrow, do it now. ". Here he is giving Catherine orders in a rather authoritative manor, and this is a prime example of the way he speaks to the female characters.

Eddie has incestuous desires for his niece, Catherine. This continues to be an ongoing problem throughout the entire play. It is quite clear to recognise Eddie's feelings toward Catherine from the opening scene. When Catherine enters, Eddie is overly keen to know where she is going due to the way she is dressed (short skirt etc); he questions her before becoming complimentary about her appearance, because he is obviously panicking that she has dressed herself specifically to impress another male.

Eddie quite clearly feels that as a man, he has a right to inquire when he feels necessary; possibly using this to conceal the fact he wants nothing more than direct control of Catherine's life. " Beautiful" he quotes Catherine when observing her new hairstyle. Through the whole of A View from the Bridge, Eddie does not pay Beatrice one single compliment, which seems rather obscure, suggesting he has more admiration for his niece than his wife. Catherine constantly seeks Eddie's approval, repeatedly asking him " You like it? about the way she looks. This tells the audience that Eddie has brought Catherine up to believe his opinion is always necessary, relating to

the idea of masculinity and the dominance possessed by the household male. The actual reason Catherine dressed herself differently was due to the fact that she has been newly employed as a stenographer: somebody who specializes in the transcription of speech. Yet again, Eddie has something to say about the fact that Catherine has a job. "You can't take no job. Why didn't you ask me before you take a job?" are his exact words when telling her rather directly how he sees the situation. He is implying that she should of asked for his permission before taking the job, and has disobeyed him by not doing so. This goes back to the idea of him being manly and sustaining his authorities. However, I do not think this is the only reason he doesn't want Catherine taking the job. It is quite clear to see Eddie has more feelings for his niece than he should have, although during the first half of *A View from The Bridge* I don't think he has discovered this for himself.

From pinpointing that Eddie was overly bothered about the length of Catherine's skirt, and her getting a job, it is clear for the audience to absorb that he does not want her to grow up, as this could possibly mean letting go and giving Catherine more independence than preferable. Although Eddie beholds a rather harsh identity, he proves himself a warm and welcoming man when his wife's cousins immigrate to America in search of employment. Marco and Rodolfo are introduced into the household: quoting "You're welcome Marco, we got plenty of room here", Eddie comes across as a very considerate person.

Marco greets Eddie with a firm shake to the hand, however Rodolfo does not. A hand shake is a typically manly gesture, and throughout the play it soon

becomes clear that Rodolfo does not fit the stereotypical figure of a man. Eddie expects a man to be a breadwinner, to have obvious physical strength, power and domination. Rodolfo appears to not possess any of these qualities, of which soon proves a serious problem to Eddie. "Paperdoll.. chorus girl.. kid.. hit-and-run-guy": these are just a minority of the nicknames given to Rodolfo throughout A View from the Bridge.

Rodolfo shows himself as a man that does not fit all the categorical standards of a typical male, and as the play goes on we see how this controversial character shines a negative reflection onto Eddie, bringing him nothing but utter aggravation. Rodolfo likes to cook, sing, dance, and even make dresses. These feminine qualities that he possesses cause Eddie to become suspicious about his sexuality, although Miller makes it quite clear that Rodolfo is not a homosexual, when his relationship with Catherine begins to bloom. To Eddie's dislike, Catherine takes an immediate shine to Rodolfo.

When she asks him " You married too? ", it is quite clear she's interested in him. Eddie is not in favour of Catherine becoming close to Rodolfo, and he clearly tries to discourage what he does by calling him petty nicknames. Underneath the front that Eddie puts on about hating Rodolfo, I think , secretly, he is particularly jealous of him. The play is set in the 1950's, and therefore there was a lot of pressure on men to live up to the expectations and be the typical male. Rodolfo is not afraid to be himself, even if it does go against all rules of typicality.

In my opinion, Rodolfo is a very brave character for doing so: he has no fear of being judged, and I think Eddie is intimidated by this. Eddie has never known any different, and so he is automatically against this new idea of a man being slightly feminine. This tells us Eddie cannot cope with change, relating back to when I mentioned how he is unable to come to grips with the fact Catherine is maturing and becoming less reliant on him. In Act Two, a drunken Eddie makes the ridiculous decision to kiss both Catherine AND Rodolfo.

He clearly does this in an attempt to clear all cobwebs, and try to see through to the truth about Rodolfo's sexuality. Unfortunately for Eddie, he only comes to discover that Rodolfo is nothing more than a heterosexual. I also believe this was an act of bare desperation; Eddie could not think of any other way of getting through to Catherine how he feels, and obviously believed this was the only way to put a stop to her and Rodolfo's relationship once and for all. However, the scene proves Rodolfo to be more manly than Eddie thought, when Rodolfo demands " Stop that!

Haverespectfor her! ". Respect is an important quality for a man to have, especially in A View from the Bridge. Although saying this, when Eddie " pins his arms" (Rodolfo), it again goes back to the idea that Rodolfo fails in the physical department of manliness. This scene is a turning point for the audience, as from this they now know rather exactly how Eddie feels towards Catherine, and how insanely jealous he truly is of her and Rodolfo's relationship. This is a serious downfall for Eddie, telling you that he is getting progressively closer to his Greek Tragedy ending.

As an audience, it is evidently apparent that Marco is in complete contrast to his brother, Rodolfo. Straight away he is thought of as a real man: " Marco goes round like a man; nobody kids Marco". This is quoted by Eddie, who quite obviously knows where he stands with Marco, and seems rather threatened by the fact that there are now two dominant male figures in the household. This goes back to when I mentioned how there is always a secret fight to be top of the hierarchy: it is just never made official. It is unnecessary for Marco to prove his manliness verbally, due to the fact that his physicality speaks for him.

He demonstrates his strength in a rather protective manor, when he strains to lift a chair directly above Eddie's head. He does this as a discrete warning, cautioning Eddie to leave his brother alone. When Eddie punches Rodolfo at the end of Act One, he makes it out to be a joke, but Marco is not silly, and clearly knows that it was nothing more than a camouflaged threat made toward Rodolfo. Marco uses physical communication; alerting Eddie that if need be, physically, he will always come out on top. When Marco does this, the other characters are oblivious to the fact that it was meant as a threat.

However, the audience would be able to recognise exactly what Marco was implying; the staging would portray the shadowed aggressiveness of the gesture, and build serious tension. It would also add to the hostile atmosphere, that had been previously created by Eddie. Alfieri is another example of a conventionally masculine character. His predominate role in the play proves him an honest, helpful and firm man. The fact that he is a lawyer also tells you as an audience, that he possess a lot of power. I think

the title of the play (A View from the Bridge), was in fact based around the role of Alfieri.

It is as if he is playing God in this tragedy; he has the ability to look over and judge the situation, but remains un-bias and uninvolved (possibly a skill he has developed from his job). Alfieri has a view from the bridge, and is looking down on a fateful occurrence (Greek Tragedy) that he cannot prevent from happening. Just after Eddie's death, Alfieri quotes " something perversely pure calls to me from his memory". Due to the fact that Alfieri has been such an honest and trustworthy character throughout, this line could sway the audience into realizing that maybe there was a good side to Eddie, as well as bad.

Eddie had a rather double-sided personality. Although his love for Catherine got the better of his character, underneath it was quite recognisable that he was generally a caring man that looked after his family very well. He was born poor, and worked hard as a longshoreman to ensure he was able to provide for his wife and niece. The background of the author himself (Arthur Miller), most probably had strong influential effects on the way A View from the Bridge was written. For example, his mother and father were Polish immigrants; this relates to the storyline of A View from the Bridge, as Marco and Rodolfo are also immigrants.

Miller obviously has a clear view of what he expects a man to be. He has made the main character (Eddie) a very typical man: domineering, strong, and respected by all. If Eddie's death was a tragedy, then in Miller's eyes he was obviously the hero of the play. Miller was born in 1915, and therefore

raised around people who too, believed that these qualities were necessary if you were to be considered a real man. A View from the Bridge is a play largely involved in the historical/cultural context of the early 20th century. The ' American Dream' correlates directly to the storyline of A View from the Bridge.

The American Dream is basically the idea that all humans are of an equal worth, and that all people should do things that give them a quotably " better, richer, and happier life. ". Eddie's perception of Rodolfo goes against this idea of the American Dream, because he believes that Rodolfo deserves to be lower in status than him, just because he is not the typical man. When Catherine begins to take an interest in Rodolfo, Eddie does his best to prevent their relationship progressing. " Don't lay another hand on her unless you wanna go out feet first" are his exact words when thinking only of oneself.

He is very selfish by doing this, and is potentially forbidding Catherine from living the American Dream (happier life). The Sicilian code of honour is another historical policy that relates to A View from the Bridge. The Sicilian code is basically a firm rule of extremeloyalty, solidarity and justice. The Mafia in the early 1900's followed this code rather closely, for example: if someone was to hurt or even threaten a member of your family, you were to honour them and take an immediate action of revenge. The mafia's law would justify the murder of Eddie Carbone, due to the fact Marco killed him purely because he posed a threat to Rodolfo.

The female characters in *A View from the Bridge* are the main victims of hostility, manliness, and aggression in this play; Catherine in particular. Due to the fact that Eddie highly dislikes Rodolfo, there is a constant hostile atmosphere present within the household. Catherine is made to feel like she must choose between Eddie and Rodolfo, which again causes hostility. This is not a typical father/daughter relationship; it is clear for the audience to see this from the way Eddie behaves when Catherine and Rodolfo are together. Eddie lives in denial about the fact that he is in love with Catherine, and uses fury to disguise it.

When Alfieri figures that Eddie has these strong feelings for his niece, he says " She can't marry you can she? "; Eddie does not know how to respond to this and again attempts to hide how he feels for Catherine by getting overly angry, " I don't know what the hell you're talkin' about! ". The audience are affected by this as, making you pity Catherine and the awkward position she is in. Beatrice suffers from this also, as Eddie is her husband. In one scene they argue about sex, because Beatrice is receiving hardly any attention from Eddie due to his aggression and confidentiality throughout the play.

Eddie is constantly taking his anger out on Beatrice, yet she never complains. However, in one scene she has clearly had enough and decides to stand up for herself and go against Eddie. " I want you to cut it out now, you hear me? I don't like it! Now come in the house. " To this I think Eddie is quite startled, and replies with " I'll be in right away". Beatrice knows full well that Eddie has more feelings for Catherine than he should: " You want

somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her! ". In this quote I think jealousy is getting the better of Beatrice, as she describes Catherine as a thing, rather than a person.