

# A view from the bridge essay



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“ A view from the bridge” has its roots set in the late 1940’s, when Arthur Miller became interested in the work lives of the communities dockworkers and longshoremen of New York’s Brooklyn harbour, where in one stage of his life he had worked. Arthur Miller had found that the ‘ waterfront was the Wild West, a desert beyond the law, where the population worked and were poorly paid, exploited by their employers and who were in most cases immigrants who came to America in hope of work, wealth and security that their own countries could not guarantee. In the beginning of the play, Alfieri talks about distrust, law and justice, “..

. you see how uneasily they nod to me? That’s because I’m a lawyer” That small quotation shows how people reacted when they saw someone who enforced the law and justice to prevail. “...

I often think in that suspicious little nod of theirs lie three thousand years of distrust. A lawyer means the law, and in Sicily, from where their father’s came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten. That quotation shows us a passage of historical background why law has been feared and disregarded by the Sicilians and why some continue to have distrust in the law. In the beginning of this tragic play, the stage directions pointedly indicate Alfieri’s desk at the right forestage. His desk is significant from beginning to end as it symbolizes justice. It does this by its positioning.

It acts like the Brooklyn Bridge, a ‘ divider’ between Brooklyn and Manhattan. In the plays context Alfieri’s desk acts as this ‘ divider’ also showing Alfieri is not only a mediator, but the only character that looks at a certain situation before objecting. Indeed at the beginning of the play Alfieri stated, “ Justice

is very important here” this quotation made me think he was giving a clue to his audience-what the theme was and what the subtext of the situation was related to. In this play, justice is all about fairness, opportunities, equality, legal enforcement, revenge and getting deserved rights. The Sicilians had a certain disregard to the American law because back in Sicily their law was one thing which clashed with the American law.

For example if a man has done wrong in the communities eyes in America, he has just lost respect from the community and is immune as long as he obeys the law, but if that man did wrong in the communities eyes in Sicily and was killed the Sicilians would not feel that they had done wrong as in their eyes justice had prevailed. In ‘ A view from the bridge’ the majority of the characters have differing needs for justice. Through the arguments of justice, disregard to the American law the need for justice and law prevailing all add to the tragic climax of the play. Eddie had a need to be the predominant male of the house to Marco and Rodolfo, showing he has all the power and control.

You can see this when Eddie ‘ teaches’ Rodolfo how to box, I personally think whilst Eddie is teaching Rodolfo he is secretly trying to give vent to his anger and jealousy towards Rodolfo. Eddie firstly eggs Rodolfo to box with him by saying, “ Betcha’ you have done some, heh? ” As Rodolfo improves, Eddie sees his chance to hit Rodolfo properly, “(... He feints with his left hand and lands with his right.

It mildly staggers Rodolfo, Marco rises.” In that passage you can see Eddie’s last blow to Rodolfo was deliberate, and I think Marco sensed this and rose

out of protection to his younger brother. I think Eddie wanted a justice to prove that he was the man in control with the higher status, and I think Marco wanted justice with Eddie for deliberately punching Rodolfo. Eddie had to justify or ‘cover up’ his ‘wrong’ attraction for Catherine.

You can see this when he tries to justify himself to Alfieri, “... I give him my house to sleep! I take the blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his filthy hands on her like a goddam thief! This passage shows Eddie’s jealousy towards Rodolfo and shows that Eddie pictures Catherine more like a precious possession more than a person, but he gets very over protective of his feelings when Alfieri says, “ She wants to get married, Eddie. She can’t marry you can she? ” as if he was subtly questioning Eddie about his inner gut feelings towards Catherine.

His over protective response, “(furiously) what’re you talkin’ about, marry me! I don’t know what the hell you’re talkin’ about! ” shows either denial or disbelief in the truth, or even both. Eventually Eddie admits, “... t’s just – it’s breakin’ my heart, y’know? ” showing that he loves Catherine, but is not prepared to let her go.

I think he wants justice with Rodolfo, because he wants to keep her around more than let her go to someone who he doesn’t approve of, and this contrasts with Rodolfo’s needs for justice, as he has a justice to abide his duty to his heart rather than his duty to respect the man who obviously has a grudge against him. Eddie Carbone has a strong need for his ‘name’ back in the community which was taken from him by Marco once Eddie informed the authorities that Marco and Rodolfo were illegal immigrants. You can see

Eddie is desperate for his name back once Marco had accused him, "(as he is taken off, Pointing back at Eddie) that one! He killed my children! That one stole food from my children! " You can see when Eddie says, " he's gonna' take that back, He's gonna' take that back or I'll kill him! " and when he says, " I want my respect" that he desperately needs his name back in the community. Eddie has a need for justice especially with Marco as he wants his ' rightful' name back in the community, which Marco had taken from him. Eddie feels a need to stand up to his wife, Beatrice when she feels that he is neglecting her.

You can see this when he is telling her about his rights, " I want respect Beatrice, and you know what I'm talking about", trying very hard to say what he means, but gives in when Beatrice asks him what he means, "(finally his resolution hardens) What I feel like doin' in the bed and what I don't feel like doin'" showing he has not shown a sexual interest towards his wife for a long time and doesn't intend to any time soon. Finally Eddie has a need for justice and respect from Rodolfo as he is the ' stand-in' parent to Catherine. You can see this when e is warning Catherine of Rodolfo, " Katie..

. if you wasn't an orphan, wouldn't he ask your father's permission before he run around with you like this? " This passage indicates Eddie clearly doesn't believe Rodolfo has any respect for him and that in a way he thinks of himself as Catherine's father. In this prospective, Eddie has an urge of justice with Rodolfo and this urge collides with Rodolfo's need for justice, as previously mentioned. Beatrice want fairness in her marriage, she wants Eddie to show her the compassionate feelings he once showed her when they first fell in love. You can see this when she says, " When am I gonna' be

a wife again, Eddie? ” she doesn’t just mean through the sexual side of their relationship but she means the love and compassion that they both shared a long time ago.

Beatrice wants justice with her relationship with her husband who continues to neglect her even after confrontation, this conflicts with Eddie’s need for justice because his needs for justice are prioritised elsewhere. Beatrice also wants justice for Catherine in her work and independence. You can clearly see this when Beatrice says, “ the girl is gonna’ be eighteen years old, it’s time already” indicating to Eddie he needs to let her out of the protected shell he has kept her in for the many years he’s known her and he needs to learn to let her make her own decisions in her life. You can see that Beatrice is keen on Catherine working when she says, “ Tell her to take it (he turns his head away) you hear me? She is angering) I don’t understand you, she’s seventeen years old, and you gonna’ keep her in the house all her life? ”

When Beatrice says that in her persuasive tone, Eddie weakens and Beatrice knows the importance of freedom for Catherine. As Beatrice wants this justice for Catherine, it conflicts with Eddie’s justice for Catherine. Beatrice wants justice with Rodolfo and Catherine’s wedding for the sake of her sister.

You can see this when Beatrice says, “ Eddie. It’s her wedding. There’ll be nobody there from her family. For my sister let me go.

I’m goin’ for my sister” this passage shows she wants to do the right thing, by attending the wedding, not for herself, Catherine or Rodolfo, but for her sister. What Beatrice wants clashes with what Eddie has in mind for his niece. Catherine has a need for justice with the way Eddie treats her. He

keeps her in a protected way, and Catherine wants her freedom to do what she likes. You can see this from the beginning, when she and Eddie are talking about her new skirt, “ I think it’s too short ain’t it? Catherine protests, “(standing) No! Not when I stand up” this passage shows that Eddie does not want Catherine to wear a short skirt and in contrast to this, Catherine wants her freedom.

You can see this when she says, “ I’m the best student, he says and if I want, I should take the job and at the end of the year he’ll let me take the examination and he’ll give me the certificate” through this passage you can see she is proving to Eddie that she is capable of handling herself and she wants faith and trust from him. However, what Eddie wants is for her to stay studying so he can ‘ keep’ her longer, whilst Catherine wants to get her independence as she has clearly earned it. Catherine finally gathers up her courage out of rage when Eddie is disloyal to Marco and Rodolfo and shouts, “ You got no more right to tell nobody nothin’! Nobody! The rest of your life, nobody! ” When she says this, the subtext of this is that he can’t control her or Beatrice anymore and whether he likes it or not he is going to have to live with it. This conflicts with what Eddie wants, as his urgent need is for him to be in control.

Rodolfo wants justice with Eddie when Eddie drunkenly disrespects Catherine by kissing her on her lips, “ Don’t! (He pulls on Eddie’s arm) Stop that! Have respect for her! ” this text shows that despite what Eddie thinks of him, Rodolfo loves Catherine and cannot see her being disrespected by anyone, this also may come from the way men treated women back from his country, and the way he reacts to the way women are treated in America. Eddie has a

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contrast with this because; he doesn't want Rodolfo anywhere near Catherine, whilst Rodolfo clearly loves her. Marco has a strong impulse of revenge against Eddie for being disloyal and untrustworthy. He knows Eddie will be deeply bruised if his pride and name is ruined, so he tells the community, " He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children! " in doing so he has ruined Eddie's once respected name. You can tell that Marco wants revenge after breaking his promise to Alfieri and when he and Eddie are about to fight, Marco strikes Eddie in such a forceful way, Eddie falls to his knees, " Animal! You go on your knees to me! When Marco says that line in rage it is clear that Eddie is no longer the predominant male between the two of them. The justice in Marco's eyes is about to proceed, but in Eddie's eyes justice has and will not be taking place.

The immigration officers don't really care about the justice between Marco and Eddie; they just want the American justice to proceed. The money they earn in the end of the day takes the priority in their eyes rather than which side is right and which side is wrong. They do however; need to carry out the American justice by letting law handle the situation. At the beginning of the play Alfieri mentioned the importance of justice, after looking into detail what the importance of justice is, I see that Alfieri had a need to do the right thing in his key position as a representative of the United States ' civilised' justice system. You can see the law meant a lot to him when he was talking to Marco, " yes in a book.

There is no other law" when Alfieri says this line he's not implying that the law is correct but the law is like a rule book, and if the rules are obeyed there will be no problems, this doesn't always mean justice prevails. Justice is



about fairness, opportunities, equality, legal enforcement, revenge and getting deserved rights. Justice is a key part of the drama because every character has a strong need for it with their situation. At the beginning and end of the play, Alfieri mentioned a very touching statement which showed me that he developed a love for Eddie because he understood him but could not help him, in any possible way. The only person, who could have helped Eddie, was simply Eddie, but sadly he never realised that until it was too late. The statement Alfieri said which brought this realisation to me was, “ Now we settle for half and I like it better” – the whole trauma could have been avoided if each character compromised with each other.

Marco and Rodolfo had a disregard for the American law and vice versa for Eddie’s disregard for the Sicilian law. Justice is something every individual has an opinion on, but in some cases the justice prevails keeping some satisfied. Yet in other cases justice doesn’t always proceed keeping some hurt or furious, or even both. Alfieri knew how important justice was at the start when he pointedly stated, “ justice is very important here. “