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A Look at A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

ARTHUR MILLER'S ORIGINAL VERSION OF *A View from the Bridge*, A one-act play, had its New York premiere on September 29, 1955. Broadway audiences have never seen Miller's two-act version, which was produced both in London and Paris. Because the script that is now usually published is the revision, and since this revision was the one selected for publication in the standard edition of Miller's plays,[1] my criticism will generally center upon this version as a working text.

Available criticism of the play is not extensive. What commentary we do have exists in the nature of reviews. Scholarly critiques are scant; most Miller critics, unfortunately, are still preoccupying themselves with Willy Loman. Eddie Carbone merits, I think, a somewhat kinder critical fate than his actual destiny in *A View from the Bridge*.

I

The setting of *A View from the Bridge* is the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, facing seaward from the Brooklyn Bridge, a section which Miller intimately knows. The central character, Eddie Carbone, is a Brooklyn longshoreman who lives with his wife, Beatrice, and his seventeen-year-old niece, Catherine (his ward), in a tenement building in Red Hook. The other two major characters are Marco and Rodolpho, Beatrice's Italian cousins, who come illegally to the United States and move in to live in Eddie's apartment. The introduction of the two "submarines" into the small world of Eddie Carbone sets the action of the play in motion.

A frame device is used in *A View from the Bridge* in the form of a modified Greek chorus. Miller creates Alfieri, a wise neighborhood lawyer of Italian ancestry, as the "engaged narrator"[2] of the story. In addition to his choric role, Alfieri functions as Eddie's confidant, further evidence of Miller's reliance upon Greek convention. In Alfieri's initial address to the audience, it is made perfectly clear that one of the themes of the play is to be man's relation to secular law:

In this neighborhood to meet a lawyer or a priest in the street is unlucky.

[1] *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays* (New York, 1957).
[2] *Collected Plays*, p. 47.

We're only thought of in connection with disasters, and they'd rather not get too close.

I often think that behind that suspicious little nod of theirs lie three thousand years of distrust. A lawyer means the law, and in Sicily, from where their fathers came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten.[3]

Alfieri goes on to explain that the people of Red Hook not only distrust the law, but that essentially their heritage is one of primitive justice. Alfieri's references to Al Capone and Frankie Yale stress the violent forms of the "justice" that once prevailed during the first waves of Italian immigration.

Much of the physical danger of Red Hook has diminished, and Alfieri tells the audience: "I no longer keep a pistol in my filing cabinet."[4] Today these Italian immigrants who people Red Hook are "quite civilized, quite American. Now we settle for half."[5] What we have in *A View from the Bridge,* ironically, is an action which involves a man, Eddie Carbone, who will not settle for half. His primitive passions, more reminiscent of the ancient ancestors to whom Alfieri alludes in his choric moments, admit no compromise and throw him into violent conflict with his milieu.

Alfieri is a romantic; his references to Sicily, the dreariness of his years of unromantic legal practice, his frequent allusions to antiquity and to his heritage, all suggest that Miller wished to frame his action in modern Brooklyn with a romantic view of that action through the persona of Alfieri. It is worth noting that only Alfieri sees anything of larger significance in Eddie's tragedy than the self-interested views of the familial participants in it. To this extent I think Dennis Welland is correct in suggesting that "This play is 'a view from the bridge' not only because its setting is Brooklyn, but more importantly because it tries to show all sides of the situation from the detached eminence of the external observer. Alfieri is essential to the play because he is the bridge from which it is seen."[6] As far as Welland goes he is perceptive; yet he fails to note that Alfieri's view, although detached, is essentially romantic. I should also like to suggest that it is helpful to think of the word "Bridge" as the bridge linking modern Brooklyn with ancient Sicily, and furthermore, in the abstract, the bridge of Time.

Interestingly enough, this bridge between past and present was portrayed vividly by the original New York set, which stressed the Greek

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 379.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Dennis Welland, *Arthur Miller* (New York, 1961), p. 105.

influence upon the play. Two massive columns were used to frame (paralleling the choric frame) the Brooklyn house in which Eddie lives. Skeletal in form, shorn of any intrusive adornment, this set avoided realistic detail. It was unfortunately changed in the two-act London and Paris versions. If, as the play seems to suggest, Miller was interested in the timelessness of Eddie's tragic deed, then a set emphasizing that timelessness would indeed be appropriate. I did not see the British version, but it is interesting to note that Margaret Webster, who did, has commented:

> Gone is the sense—so impressive to me in New York—of a people of ancient lineage reborn on the Brooklyn waterfront, yet still the prey of those smoldering buried passions which wrought the Classic tragedies. The dynamite is not less, but the scale is smaller.[7]

Although Miller defends his change to a more realistic set on the basis of making Eddie's social context clearer,[8] no further clarity actually emerges. In essence, Miller, in his attempt to portray more vividly a realistic milieu, diminished the universality of his theme and the myth-like atmosphere of his piece.

Most obvious of all the changes, of course, is the division into two acts.[9] This hurts the play; the propelling force of Eddie's obsessive movement toward self-destruction is interrupted and lessens the power and spiraling intensity of the work.

In addition to the change in set and the division into two acts, Miller has made another change that by and large weakens his original version. One of the strengths of the one-act version was the more effective use of the narrator. "Good evening. Welcome to the theater," Alfieri greeted his audience. "This is the end of the story. Good night," were his final words. This representational device, which deliberately framed the play *as a play,* is absent in the revised version. Such a difference in representation may seem minor at first glance; but consider that Alfieri narrates and participates in a tale whose power is positively stunning; to snap the thread of audience involvement, as was

[7] Margaret Webster, "A Look at the London Season," *Theatre Arts,* XLI (May, 1957), 29.

[8] *Collected Plays,* pp. 50–51.

[9] This became necessary, Miller explains in the paperback edition of the play, because of the expansion of Beatrice's role. This accounts for almost all of the additional dialogue, of which Margaret Webster observed after covering the play's London premiere: "This [*A View from the Bridge*] has been expanded by about twenty minutes of new dialogue, most of which seemed to me to be dotting i's and crossing t's, and is split in half by a long interval, much to its detriment." See Webster, "A Look at the London Season," *Theatre Arts,* XLI (May, 1957), 28–29.

the case in the original version, with a casual "Good night," is a theatrical tour de force. Psychologically, Miller's alteration was unsound.[10]

In his revised Prologue to the tragedy, Alfieri romanticizes and waxes nostalgic:

> . . . in Calabria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse, another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat there as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course.[11]

Two points should be made here. This passage stresses, first, the timelessness of Eddie's tragedy and the human condition, and second, the inevitability of the happenings the audience is about to see presented on the stage. In the Prologue the audience is prepared for violence. Repeatedly throughout the play Alfieri stresses his powerlessness to halt the movements of Eddie's path toward disaster. And of course the irony involved is that we too, the audience, shall sit as dumbfounded and powerless to stop Eddie Carbone from self-destruction as Alfieri. Miller comments upon this emotional reaction of the audience:

> I wanted the audience to feel toward it [the story] as I had on hearing it for the first time—not so much with heart-wringing sympathy as with wonder. For when it was told to me I knew its ending a few minutes after the teller had begun to speak. I wanted to create suspense but not by withholding information. It must be suspenseful because one knew too well how it would come out, so that the basic feeling would be the desire to stop this man and tell him what he was really doing to his life.[12]

Eddie's subliminal incestuous love for Catherine exists prior to Rodolpho's appearance. Catherine is cautioned about her "walkin' wavy," and the looks the local candy-store cowboys give her. Until Rodolpho the threat of sexual rivals is remote—the rivalry does not intrude into Eddie's household. Until the arrival of the blond submarine, male dominance in his own house is unchallenged. Underlying Eddie's fear of sexual rivals is suspicion; he is basically distrustful of other people, and this is one of the major differences between him and Catherine and Beatrice. This central motif of suspicion is illuminated in a conversation that focuses upon Catherine's receiving Eddie's reluctant permission to

[10] One change from the original is advantageous. Eddie no longer is the parent of two children. Childlessness intensifies his passion for Catherine; she is in fact his only baby, and this change makes his dilemma more pitiable. Without Catherine he would be left truly childless and lonely, and his anguish is thereby magnified.

[11] *Collected Plays,* p. 379.

[12] From Arthur Miller's introduction to the paperback edition of *A View from the Bridge* (New York, 1960), p. vii.

work as a stenographer in a plumbing factory. Compare the polar viewpoints expressed in the advice given to Catherine by Eddie and Beatrice:

EDDIE: I only ask you one thing—don't trust nobody. You got a good aunt but she's got too big a heart, you learned bad from her. Believe me.
BEATRICE: Be the way you are, Katie, don't listen to him.[13]

This suspicion and caution help to explain Eddie's attitude toward hiding the two submarines. Eddie demands of Catherine and Beatrice complete silence. In recounting the story of Vinny Bolzano, a boy who informed on his submarine uncle, Miller establishes the tribal attitude of the Italian immigrants who people Red Hook toward an informer. The boy was set upon by his own family, was dragged by his feet with his head banging against the stairs, into the street, and was never heard from again. Informing, the unforgivable sin of betrayal, is punishable by ostracism, expulsion from the tribe. Eddie's narration of the circumstances of Vinny Bolzano's story dramatically foreshadows his own fate after he is similarly guilty of betrayal. It is ironic that the Bolzano story is first mentioned by Eddie; Miller thus underscores from the beginning Eddie's keen awareness of the code of justice in the polis of which he is a part. *Despite* this unwritten neighborhood law, he eventually turns informer. His betrayal is evidence of the intensity of his passion for Catherine and the unswerving direction of his obsessive love for her.

II

Critics have completely overlooked, evidently viewing it as purely representational, Rodolpho's singing of "Paper Doll," except to indicate that Martin Ritt, the stage director of the New York production, caught the satire of Italian singers who consciously imitate the singing style of American crooners.[14] However, what is much more crucial is that, like many of the songs in Shakespeare's plays, the lyrics of "Paper Doll" in *A View from the Bridge* illuminate the dilemma of the tragic hero. Quite clearly, Arthur Miller, who could have selected any of a plethora of Tin Pan Alley favorites, chose "Paper Doll" for definite reasons. The lyrics explain his choice:

"I'll tell you boys it's tough to be alone,
And it's tough to love a doll that's not your own.
I'm through with all of them,

[13] *Collected Plays,* pp. 386–387.
[14] Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript: Death of a Longshoreman," *Saturday Review,* XXXVIII (October 15, 1955), 26.

I'll never fall again,
Hey, boy, what you gonna do?
I'm gonna buy a paper doll that I can call my own, A doll that other fellows cannot steal (Eddie rises and moves upstage.)
And then those flirty, flirty guys
With their flirty, flirty eyes
Will have to flirt with dollies that are real—[15]

The dominant theme of the lyric is that the singer is going to buy a paper doll that other fellows cannot steal; in other words, an object of love which will obviate the possibility of rivalry and theft. The relevance to Eddie Carbone is striking. Throughout the play (which incidentally is interwoven with imagery of thievery) Eddie repeatedly accuses Rodolpho of having stolen Catherine from him or alludes to it. Catherine is Eddie's paper doll. Rodolpho is the flirty, flirty guy, and the interesting fact that the singer intends to "buy" a paper doll parallels exactly Eddie's attitude that he has a basic right to control Catherine's actions because of the enormous personal sacrifices he has made in order to raise her:

I worked like a dog twenty years so a punk could have her, so that's what I done. I mean, in the worst times, in the worst, when there wasn't a ship comin' in the harbor, I didn't stand around lookin' for relief—I hustled. When there was empty piers in Brooklyn I went to Hoboken, Staten Island, the West Side, Jersey, all over—because I made a promise. I took out of my own mouth to give to her. I took out of my wife's mouth. I walked hungry plenty days in this city![16]

Eddie's hostility toward Rodolpho is revealed in his thinly veiled suggestion of his suspicion of Rodolpho's homosexuality, first mentioned to Beatrice. Never concrete in his accusation, the closest Eddie comes to specific identification is to label Rodolpho a "weird."[17] "Queer," the more common pejorative for a homosexual, could easily have been used by Miller,[18] but the selection of the word "weird" subtilizes Eddie's suggestion and is more appropriate to the texture of shadowy innuendo in which he is working. Rodolpho, we and Beatrice are informed, is now known by Eddie's longshoreman pals as "Paper Doll . . . Canary."[19] He does "a regular free show"; and it is unnecessary, I

[15] *Collected Plays,* p. 396. With the exception of Miller's italicized stage directions, the italics are mine.
[16] *Ibid.,* p. 404–410.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 398.
[18] Gerald Weales in a different context has briefly noted Eddie's avoidance of the word "queer." See his "Arthur Miller: Man and His Image," *Tulane Drama Review,* VII (Fall, 1962), 175.
[19] *Collected Plays,* p. 398.

think, to belabor the sexual overtones of this phrase. His hair is "wacky . . . he's like a chorus girl or sump'm,"[20] Eddie tells us. In this dialogue Eddie is the accuser, making sly, damaging suggestions, while Beatrice attempts to defend Rodolpho against such innuendoes and to dismiss their relevance. Set in striking juxtaposition to this scene is the following with Eddie and his friends, Louis and Mike. A surface glance reveals its comic relief. But there is something more. Actually what Miller has done (again reminiscent of Shakespeare's use of comic scenes) is to illuminate the earlier scene by reversing Eddie's role. In his meeting with Louis and Mike, it is Eddie who is placed in the uncomfortable position of defending Rodolpho against the same innuendoes now being leveled at him by Mike and Louis. This has gone completely unnoted by critics. Notice the striking similarity between Beatrice's and Eddie's language in trying to explain Rodolpho's odd behavior on the waterfront piers:

BEATRICE [to Eddie]: Well, he's a kid; he don't know how to behave himself yet.[21]

EDDIE [to Louis and Mike]: Yeah, I know. But he's a kid yet, y'know? He —he's just a kid, that's all.[22]

An echo of Beatrice's words. An ironic reversal of roles. Furthermore it is Mike, in the comic scene, who assumes Eddie's role of the insinuator in the previous scene. Not only does this scene help to illuminate through comedy and juxtaposition the earlier scene and help to establish the discomfort of Eddie's dilemma, but it lends credence to Eddie's suspicion that Rodolpho is a homosexual by buttressing through representation the reactions of Eddie's pals to Rodolpho, reactions which Eddie had just described to Beatrice in the previous scene. It seems to me to be one of the major deficiencies of the criticism of *A View from the Bridge* that no recognition has been made of Miller's abundantly clear attempt to make *some* case for Eddie's behavior. Eddie's reaction to Rodolpho is not as isolated, as bizarre and monstrous, as the critics suggest.[23] On the contrary, we have seen (and I shall later point out additional textual evidence) that other characters in the play, namely, Eddie's longshoreman pals—whose background is similar to Eddie's and whose views are not distorted by incestuous desire for Catherine—

[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 400.
[23] Of all the play's reviewers, only Eric Bentley has recognized Miller's ambiguity concerning the fact that Rodolpho may be a homosexual: ". . . we don't feel sure the accusation is false." See "Theatre," *New Republic,* CXXXIII (December 19, 1955), 22.

also read Rodolpho as a "weird." Eddie Carbone, as Arthur Miller has carefully created him, is not isolated in his reactions to Rodolpho.

Eddie's meetings with his confidant, Alfieri, provide a closer look into Eddie's private world. The suggestion that Rodolpho is a homosexual, which he never makes concretely to Beatrice, is more directly stated to Alfieri (although the word "homosexual" is never used). The jibes of Eddie's peers are revealed as he attempts to construct a case against Rodolpho to convince Alfieri that the young submarine is a homosexual. What emerges as a central issue in this scene is that under the written law Eddie Carbone has no recourse *even* if his accusation is true.

Eddie's accusation reveals a mind tortured by the fear that he is about to lose Catherine, and his distress is compounded by his suspicion that Rodolpho is a homosexual. Yet this suspicion, ironically, provides Eddie with a seemingly innocent motive for opposing the marriage of Catherine and Rodolpho. Eddie's accusation of inversion is the foundation upon which he attempts to structure a case against Rodolpho. His efforts to enlist the assistance of Alfieri on his behalf are based upon convincing Alfieri of Rodolpho's homosexuality—of convincing Alfieri that Rodolpho "ain't right." The zeal with which he takes up his hostility to Rodolpho externalizes the intensity of his own passion for Catherine, and obviates any necessity for self-examination which might expose this underlying passion—an exposure Eddie is unable to face. Witness, for example, Eddie's horror when Beatrice confronts him at the end of the play with an open declaration of his subconscious feelings for his niece:

> EDDIE, *crying out in agony:* That's what you think of me—that I would have such a thought? *His fists clench his head as though it will burst.*[24]

And, similarly, during his first interview with Alfieri, Eddie reacts furiously to Alfieri's suggestion that he may want Catherine for himself: "What're you talkin' about, marry me! I don't know what the hell you're talkin' about!"[25]

Alfieri, with sagacity and insight, realizes that the real problem involved is Eddie's excessive love for Catherine:

> You know, sometimes God mixes up the people. We all love somebody, the wife, the kids—every man's got somebody that he loves, heh? But sometimes . . . there's too much. You know? There's too much, and it goes where it mustn't.[26]

Alfieri suggests that this excess of love (and Alfieri never challenges

[24] *Collected Plays,* p. 438.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 410.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 409.

Eddie's genuine protective love for Catherine) may begin to overflow in unnatural directions. Law, Alfieri explains to Eddie, is merely a codification of what is natural and has a right to happen. Eddie's frustration in learning that the law is uninterested in his case against Rodolpho breaks through in an impassioned speech which echoes the theme of "Paper Doll":

> And now I gotta sit in my own house and look at a son-of-a-bitch punk like that—which he came out of nowhere! I give him my house to sleep! I take the blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his dirty filthy hands on her *like a goddam thief!*[27]

Let us listen again to those all-important lyrics: "I'm gonna buy a paper doll that I can call my own. / A doll that other fellows cannot steal." And now Eddie crying to Alfieri: "He's stealing from me!"[28] The robbery motif, the imagery of thievery in Eddie's anguished speech and in the lyrics of "Paper Doll," is clearly not accidental.

Symbolically, Alfieri (Reason) is contrasted with Eddie (Passion); Eddie is a man governed by his passions, and in *A View from the Bridge* Miller is showing us the deficiencies of an impulsive man who operates without the moderation imposed by reason. Yet, one of the elemental ironies of the play is that Alfieri, a symbol of rational thought, a man of legal training, ordered procedure, wisdom, and basic native intelligence, is also powerless to stop the onrushing tide and sweep of the horrible events in this play. Alfieri realizes the direction in which Eddie is heading, but is puzzled by his own inability to halt him. His only gesture is to consult, in an admission of personal helplessness, "a certain old lady in the neighborhood, a very wise old woman" (a practice common among many clannish societies), and is told to "Pray for him."[29] The written law, man's own law, is inadequate here, Miller seems to be saying. Eddie Carbone's fate is in the hands of the Gods. How much like Greek tragedy!

III

Earlier I mentioned that there is additional evidence to support Eddie's view that Rodolpho is a homosexual, evidence which suggests that not only Eddie thinks Rodolpho is a homosexual. Eddie, recall, visits Alfieri after the famous scene in which he seizes Rodolpho and, in front of Catherine, kisses him.[30] Alfieri, who tries to dissuade Eddie

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 410. Italics mine.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] It is notable that Miller relies upon translatable physical action—not dialogue—to represent Eddie's contempt for Rodolpho. An earlier instance of action to represent passion occurs in the scene in which Eddie proposes to teach Rodol-

from informing and senses that he is now so inclined, shouts to Eddie after an interview: "You won't have a friend in the world, Eddie! Even those who understand will turn against you, *even the ones who feel the same* will despise you!"[31]

Despite the fact that he recognizes the thoughtlessness of Eddie's action, Alfieri is nevertheless unmistakably aware that others, namely Eddie's fellow longshoremen, also suspect that Rodolpho is a homosexual. Moreover, the scene with Eddie and his friends, Louis and Mike, is instructive here in pointing up that others besides Eddie share his suspicions about Rodolpho. The diction and the tenor of the dialogue clearly suggest that the longshoremen, of whom Louis and Mike are representative, respond to Rodolpho as does Eddie. In the conversation outside Eddie's house, for instance, Louis and Mike, after expressing amazement at Marco's masculine strength, confirm Eddie in his suspicions. Immediately following their words about Marco, we have this glaring contrast:

MIKE, *grinning:* That blond one, though—*Eddie looks at him.* He's got a sense of humor. *Louis snickers.*[32]

Miller is careful to note that Mike's words about the "blond one" are framed with a grin, and that Louis then snickers, a direction that significantly reveals that something is being withheld in this conversation. The character of what Mike has to say to Eddie, reinforced by Louis' response, does not indicate an appreciation of Rodolpho's humor *per se*; on the contrary, Mike's words refer to the young submarine's odd behavior on the waterfront. Continuing, Mike relates to Eddie in a fit of hysterical laughter: "You take one look at him—everybody's happy."[33] One day while working with Rodolpho at the Moore MacCormack Line, the other longshoremen "was all hysterical."[34] Miller's stage directions following these words should not be neglected: *"Louis and he* [Mike] *explode in laughter."*[35] Furthermore, it is worth noting

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pho how to box. This fight scene also establishes the play's vendetta motif. After Eddie staggers Rodolpho, Marco, generally reticent, arises and challenges Eddie to lift a chair by one of its front legs, a feat which Eddie cannot accomplish. In a terrifying display of strength and determination, Marco raises the chair in a symbolic gesture of triumph, and holds it as a weapon over Eddie's head. Stunning in its power, this scene directly parallels the final scene: both acts conclude with Eddie on his knees before Marco.

[31] *Collected Plays,* p. 424. Italics mine.

[32] *Ibid.,* p. 400.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.* During Eddie's first interview with Alfieri, we have a telling passage in which the character of Louis and Mike's convulsive laughter, which punctuates the conversation about Rodolpho, and its effect upon Eddie's mind are movingly

that Eddie, Miller tells us, is *"Troubled"* by this conversation. In essence, the significance of this scene is to solidify Eddie's private suspicions of Rodolpho's weird behavior by displaying a public representation and confirmation of these suspicions through the personae of Louis and Mike.

The working environment of which Eddie is a part, specifically, longshoremen, consists of a group of men who depend for their livelihood upon their physical power. Loading and unloading cargo is grueling, physical, masculine labor. I emphasize what is obvious because I wish to make strikingly clear that longshoremen would quite naturally associate physical labor with masculinity. Rodolpho, on the other hand, can sew, sing (in a very high voice, perhaps somewhat effeminate?) and cook—all aptitudes which in the minds of longshoremen, or for that matter any working group which relies upon sheer masculine physical power, are associated with femininity. Plainly Rodolpho is not a homosexual because he sings in a high voice and can cook and sew. But because of their background and work it is understandable that Eddie and his peers regard Rodolpho as they do. And this is why Alfieri, who appreciates the psychology of his Red Hook clients, can say "*even the ones who feel the same* will despise you." It is fallacious to suggest that Eddie Carbone is isolated in his response to Rodolpho. What does finally isolate Eddie from his community is not his innuendoes or even his attempt to degrade Rodolpho in front of Catherine. Rather, it is his overt act of betrayal, of informing the immigration authorities that Rodolpho and Marco are submarines. By this one decisive act, Eddie commits the unforgivable sin of informing, with the inevitable consequence of isolation from his social context.

For betrayal, Marco's spitting in Eddie's face is a symbolic murder which foreshadows his act of murder at the conclusion of the play. The spitting, coupled with a public accusation ("That one! He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children"[36]), underscores the imagery of theft. According to Eddie, Rodolpho has stolen Catherine; Marco has stolen Eddie's "good name." Balancing Eddie's victimization, Marco feels that Eddie has stolen a chance for the life of his

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illuminated for us: EDDIE: "Mr. Alfieri, they're laughin' at him on the piers. I'm ashamed. Paper Doll they call him. Blondie now. His brother thinks it's because he's got a sense of humor, see—which he's got—but that ain't what they're laughin'. Which they're not goin' to come out with it because they know he's my relative, which they have to see me if they make a crack, y'know? But I know what they're laughin' at, and when I think of that guy layin' his hands on her I could—I mean it's eatin' me out, Mr. Alfieri, because I struggled for that girl." See *Collected Plays,* p. 408.

[36] *Collected Plays,* p. 433.

children. We might also note that although Eddie's betrayal was not designed to net the two submarine nephews of the butcher, Lipari, both the neighborhood and Lipari condemn and punish Eddie just as severely as if Eddie's act had been originally perpetrated against Lipari and his family. In other words, it is inconsequential against *whom* Eddie informs; the act of informing is what is unforgivable and unforgettable in the Red Hook mind.

Marco is a symbol of primitive justice. Like Eddie, he will not settle for half. The symbolic murder of spitting in Eddie's face does not satisfy his appetite for revenge. As he says to a fearful Alfieri: "In my country he would be dead now. He would not live this long."[37] Marco is a product of the Old World. "Not quite civilized, not quite American," he insists upon a primitive form of justice.[38] Ironically, Marco is as dissatisfied with the law as Eddie. Both want from the law what the law has not been designed to provide—indiscriminate punishment; in a word, retributive justice. An interesting parallel is evident: Eddie seeks recourse to the law to prevent Catherine from marrying someone who "ain't right." When recourse to the law fails, he informs. Marco too wants Eddie punished for degrading his brother, robbing his children, mocking his work. Learning there is no law for that, he reneges on his word to Alfieri and ultimately kills Eddie. Marco's code of law is primitive, punitive justice. As he takes Marco's hand (the same hand that held the chair as a threatening weapon) Alfieri counsels him: "This is not God, Marco. You hear? Only God makes justice."[39] Interestingly enough, both Eddie and Marco receive warnings from Alfieri; both men reject his advice.

Alfieri, the romantic, makes the clearest statement of authorial opinion we have in *A View from the Bridge*. He recognizes the waste of Eddie's death and the violation of a code of honor. But Alfieri, in his Epilogue following Eddie's death, assigns a dignity to Eddie's action which would otherwise be ambiguous:

> I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory—not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients.[40]

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] It is worth noting how carefully Miller has drawn a contrast between Marco and Rodolpho. Clearly distinguishable are Marco's primitive intransigence (his refusal to forgive Eddie and his desire for revenge); his loyalty to the Old World (he does not wish to become an American citizen); and his physical characteristics (dark). In contrast we have Rodolpho's civilized conciliation to Eddie (he apologizes for causing all the trouble); his renunciation of Italy (he wishes to become an American citizen); and his physical characteristics (light).

[39] *Collected Plays,* p. 435.

[40] *Ibid.,* p. 439.

Eddie Carbone is a tragic figure, Miller clearly feels, because in the intransigence of his actions there is an implicit fidelity to the self, an integrity to one's own beliefs no matter how perverse they may be. However wrong he may have been, and Alfieri is not unmindful of Eddie's tragic deed, Eddie nonetheless pursues what he regards as a proper course of action.[41] Reason was absent in his behavior, but the irony is that Alfieri, a product of the compromising attitude of the Italian-American community of Red Hook ("we settle for half"), still loves a man who did not settle for half. Alfieri, the romantic, admires the purity of Eddie's emotions, not the rightness or wrongness of them. Of Alfieri's rewritten Epilogue in the revised version of *A View from the Bridge* Miller has this to say, which I think suggests how desperately he wanted to make clear that Eddie is a tragic figure:

> In revising the play it became possible to accept for myself the implication I had sought to make clear in the original version, which was that however one might dislike this man, who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses or exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity, and justice.[42]

Although Miller considers Eddie a tragic figure, he nonetheless apparently has never had any clearly defined outline of the emotions toward Eddie which he wanted to elicit from his audience. A comparison of his own statements reveals this uncertainty. In the introduction to his *Collected Plays,* Miller suggests that the changes he made in revising the original version had this result: "It was finally possible to mourn this man."[43] On the other hand, three years later, in a new introduction to the paperback reprint of the play, Miller had this to say: "Eddie is still not a man to weep over."[44] Miller's confusion, I think, is the result of his preoccupation with the moral element in *A View from the Bridge* rather than eliciting specific emotions. The dilemma of a man—Eddie—betraying the code of his social milieu is of paramount consequence to Miller, and is what engages his creative energy. His failure to clarify what emotions the audience will feel reveals itself even in the statement about Eddie that he makes Alfieri deliver in the Epilogue to the play. Alfieri, like Miller, has ambivalent feelings

[41] Dennis Welland notes Eddie's "moral intransigence," and makes the shrewd observation that Alfieri's rewritten curtain speech "prevents our seeing Eddie as the animal—which is what Marco has just called him." See *Arthur Miller,* p. 104.
[42] *Collected Plays,* p. 51.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[44] *A View from the Bridge,* p. x.

toward Eddie: "And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so I mourn him—I admit it—with a certain . . . alarm."[45]

Despite Miller's recognition of Eddie's moral flaw, he (and I think this is typical of Miller's vision of life) cannot ignore the essential humanity of his characters. His faith in the dignity of man is what leaves him unable to dismiss completely the humanly fallible Eddie Carbone from the race of humanity. Perhaps Linda's words in *Death of a Salesman* can illuminate for us what Miller really thinks of Eddie Carbone:

I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman [Eddie Carbone?] never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person.

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[45] *Collected Plays*, p. 439.