The Angst in the Community

I think that man is a social animal; there's no getting away from it. He's in society the way a fish is in water, and the water is in the fish.

- Miller.
The Angst In The Community

In 1955 Miller's new dramatic venture was produced as a double bill of two one-act plays, *A Memory of Two Mondays* and *A View from the Bridge*. Miller later changed his *A View from the Bridge* into a two-act play for its London production. Both these plays centre on life in a closed community and reassure the value of the community. They are more aptly called the "Social Plays".

"Nothing in this book was written with greater love, and for myself I love nothing printed here better than this play" (49) says Miller in his "Introduction" about *A Memory of Two Mondays* while some of the reviews said it was "uninterruptedly bad" and it was a shapeless picture of life in a warehouse during the Depression. Miller's abiding affection for this least striking play is understandable for in this play he recalls the simple, undemanding, unselfconsciously oppressed folks with whom he worked at the Tenth Avenue Chadwick-Delamater warehouse during the peak of the Depression. Like Miller, Bert works in the warehouse to save money to get to college, gets to know the people with whom he works, shares their troubles, joys, hopes and disillusionment. And then like the author, he leaves. Bert steps out of one existence into another without the world acknowledging it with applause. And the play is over. Miller was trying not to forge a pretense of life, but to be abrupt, clear, and explicit in his exposition of the human predicament. "*A Memory of Two Mondays* has a story but no plot, because the life it reflects appears to me to strip people of alternatives and will beyond a close and tight periphery in which they may exercise a meager choice", Miller tells us while introducing the play (50).
The play opens in the shipping room of a large auto-parts warehouse on the first of the two Mondays. There is a “general untidiness” about the place which is “dirty and unmanageably chaotic”; “rarely swept” but “it is also romantic” (332) says Miller in his stage directions. Into this claustrophobic world, the characters of Miller’s play report one by one on a Monday morning. Most of them are comic types – Raymond, the tough manager in his forties; Kenneth, twenty six, the poet and the aimless; Larry, thirty-nine, the father of triplets and an insensitive husband; Gus, sixty eight, the barrel-bellied lewd rowdy who goes for a weekend binge with Jim, in his seventies; Tom, the chronic drunk; Frank, the truck driver and a known womanizer; Bert, the studious, innocent eighteen-year old; Agnes, the ever laughing spinster; Patricia, pretty and flirtatious; and many more. A little before nine they are ready to join their work for the day which includes taking orders off the hook, selecting the parts from the bins, and setting the merchandise on the table, where Kenneth packages and addresses the parts. It is a perfect picture of the American machine civilization in between the two great wars where people toil hard to pass the hours between birth and death.

Bert, who recollects this picture for us from his memory, is new to this world of the warehouse. He is different from them as he is capable of dreaming of something bigger than this mundane monotonous life. Life in the warehouse is strange for him for he has never seen people going on and on with the same works all their lives. But he has no other go but to endure for he needs to save money to fulfill his dream of education. He is thrown into this situation by external forces. He has no choice of his own. In the course of his work he entertains himself reading Tolstoy and the newspaper. He enjoys talking to Kenneth who recites poetry. In the warehouse, amidst the gehenna of purposeless toil the rest of them comfortably carry on with the regular gossip of how
they spent their weekends, drinking or carousing; Gus teasing Agnes; Jim and Gus discussing the women they last spend time with; Larry complaining about the dust; and an eternal flow of crowd going in and out of the single toilet meant for all of them.

Suddenly, the community gets together to tackle the crisis that arises when Tom comes to work dead drunk on a day when Mr. Eagle is going to visit. As Harold Clurman puts it in his “Introduction” to *Portable*, “All the warehouse fellows sense their kinship with their alcoholic comrade broken by the conditions that obtain there, and they try to protect him” (xix).

Raymond: Can you hear me, Tom? Mr. Eagle is coming to look things over today, Tom.

Jim: Little shot of whisky might bring him to.

Gus: Bert!... Here, go downstairs bring a shot. Tell him for Tommy. ... I only got ten cents.

Raymond: Here. (he reaches into his pocket as Jim, Kenneth, and Larry all reach into their pockets)

Bert: Okay, I’ll be right up.

Raymond: Well, this is it Gus. I gave him his final warning.

Gus—(he is worried): All right, go ‘way, go ’way. ...

Raymond: You heard me, Agnes. I told him on Saturday, didn’t i?

Agnes: But Ray, look how nice and clean he came in today. His hair is all combed, and he’s much neater.

Raymond: I did my best, Agnes.

Gus, (Staring into Tommy’s dead face): Ach. He don’t see nothin’, Agnes.
Agnes: And he's supposed to be saving for his daughter's confirmation dress! Oh, Tommy. I'd better cool his face.

Kenneth: Ah, you can't blame the poor feller; sixteen years of his life in this place.

Larry: You said it.

Kenneth: There's a good deal of monotony connected with the life, isn't it?

Larry: You ain't kiddin’.

Kenneth: Oh, there must be a terrible lot of Monday mornings in sixteen years. And no philosophical idea at all, y'know, to pass the time. (347)

Kenneth hits the nail on the head. The predicament that all of them face is that they are bored of the tedium of the warehouse; living and partly living; some of them know it, some of them unknowingly try to sink there sorrow in drinking, some of them like Kenneth know it but do not have the courage to break away from it. They have become like pegs in the holes of a machine and they have no existence outside that machine. Miller in his “On Social Play” says, “We have finally come to serve the machine. The machine must not be stopped, marred, left dirty or outmoded. Only men can be left marred, stopped, dirty and alone” (Theatre Essays, 60). These characters do not suffer heroic disasters; they are simply worn down by drudgery and grime.

As the crisis of Tom is overcome by the community, Kenneth and Bert want to take up the next project to brighten up their lives, to wash the windows to “let a little of God’s light in the place” (357). As they wash the incredibly filthy windows, the summer light flows into the room and ecstatic Kenneth breaks into poetry:
Kenneth: Hey, look down there!
See the old man sitting in a chair?
And roses all over the fence!
Oh, that’s a lovely backyard. (357)

Life for the warehouse workers is bleak. Like Peter in Miller’s *Mr. Peter’s Connections* the audience would look at them and say with a sigh “most of the founding fathers believed that God had wound up the world like a clock and then disappeared. We are unwinding now, the ticks further and further apart. So instead of tick-tick-tick-tick we’ve got tick (pause) tick (pause) tick. And we get bored between ticks, and boredom is a form of dying” (quoted in Bigsby, “Arthur Miller Poet”). The only way to break this monotony for Kenneth is to fly with the wings of poesy. He dreams of the “real summer sky and a little white cloud goin’ over” and “the autumn comin’ over and the leaves falling on the gray days” (357). For Bert, life here is meaningless and he is waiting for the right moment to be able to leave. He faces a cultural estrangement in the warehouse, as he is alienated from his surroundings; he faces a predicament similar to Mersault of Camus and the narrator in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*. The rest have become paralyzed and insensitive; they have ceased to feel their plight. Frustrated with the situation Bert exclaims:

Bert: There’s something so terrible here!
There always was, and I don’t know what.
Gus, and Agnes, and Tommy and Larry, Jim and Patricia –
Why does it make me so sad to see them every morning?
It’s like the subway;
Every day I see the same people getting on
And the same people getting off,
And all that happens is that they get older. God! (358)

Bert cannot comprehend what point there can be, beyond habit and necessity, for men to live like this. It is beyond his ken that men live this way because they must “serve an industrial apparatus which feeds them in body and leaves them to find sustenance for their souls as they may”, says Miller (Theatre Essays, 65)

Miller hints at the perverted sexual morality of the age throughout the play. Gus and Jim spend their weekends with young girls even when Gus’ wife is in her deathbed. Frank delivers goods in places where he can also meet a woman. Larry has got his new car so that he can give his girl friends more rides. When the windows are washed and through them one can see the brothel next door, there are men staring at the window throughout the day only to look at the naked prostitutes. Mr. Eagle has a peculiar reaction to the problem, ‘Shouldn’t have washed the windows” (369). Like Eliot’s Wasteland Miller points out the obsession of the generation with sex and the spiritual degradation of the times.

“When men live, as they do under any industrialized system, as integers,” they have “no weight, no person”, says Miller in “On Social Plays” (Theatre Essays, 58). Gus, the long term worker of the Depression years, has almost been reduced to a kind of an entity who has lost his identity, “The liveliness of Gus as a character has exactly the right relationship to the deathliness of the job he has to do. We see how his loyalty to the others, his bursts of temper, his joking threats, his impulses, and his values all
derive from the life he lives. His whole personality is a comment on the society.”
(Hayman, 73). He is like Auden’s Unknown Citizen in the modern American society:

- He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
- One against whom there was no official complaint,
- And all the reports on his conduct agree
- That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
- For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
- Except for the War till the day he retired
- He worked in a factory and never got fired,
- But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc. …
- And our Social Psychology workers found
- That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink. …
- Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
- Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard (Auden).

Gus is the perfect example of the individual thrown into a situation on which he has no control. Caught up in the mesh, unable to extricate himself, he finds relief in womanizing, drinking and making merry. His only escape is possible through a complete absorption into the world – the escape of the inauthentic existence. Gus’ long speech, about how long he has been here, depicts what he has gone through in these long monotonous years:

- Gus: Twenty two years I was here. … I was here before you was born I was here.
- Bert; I know.

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Gus: Them mice was here before you was born. When Mr. Eagle was in high school I was already here. When there was Winton Six I was here. When was Minerva car I was here. When was Stanley Steamer I was here, and Steam Knight, and Marmon was good car; I was here all the times. I was here first day Raymond come; he was young boy; work hard be manager. When Agnes sill think she was gonna get married I was here. When Locomobile, and Model K Ford and Model N Ford – all them different Fords, … all them was good cars. All them times I was here.(370)

Gus, finally decides to leave the warehouse, not because he wants to do something better but because he thinks he has enough money to make merry for the rest of his life. He buys new clothes, picks up some girls, hires three taxis, and makes a rum-sodden pilgrimage to every bar he can find. To everyone’s surprise Gus is found dead in one of the cars, and one of his girls fast asleep right beside his dead body. Separated from the warehouse where he almost fossilized himself, Gus cannot exist even for a day. The community is important for the survival and sustenance of the characters in the play. “The warehouse symbolizes their corporate existence, the source of both despair and stability”, says Leonard Moss (Moss, 51).

Miller describes the play as a “pathetic comedy” depicting a narrow perspective of life. June Schlueter and James Flanagan opine, “The world that Miller projects in the play is similar to the world of Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot” (Schlueter and Flanagan, 86), which appeared on the American stage around the same time. For Didi and Gogo, in Beckett’s play, the roadside under the tree is the circumscribed world of
their existence; they return to it each day to fill the space of time with activity that takes
them nowhere but that assures them they exist. Miller’s play world is the warehouse “a
world in which things are endlessly sent and endlessly received; only time never comes
back” (Theatre Essays, 65). *Waiting for Godot* begins with the words “Nothing to be
done” and “There’s nothing to show” (Beckett). All that is done is only to “pass the
time”. In that world, “Nothing you can do about it. ... One is what one is. ... No use
wriggling. ... The essential doesn’t change” (Beckett). Similar is the situation in
Miller’s play. A critic once said that in *Waiting for Godot* nothing happens, twice. One
can say the same about *A Memory of Two Mondays* for the play set first on a Monday in
summer and then on a Monday in winter is essentially no different from the two days in
Beckett’s play. On both the days there are the same characters in the same place doing
exactly the same work at the same hour. Of course, unlike Godot, Mr. Eagle does come
to inspect and to survey their work. But that too is a part of the routine. The play
imitates the absurdity of the everyday world to a great extent.

The only ray of hope in the play is Bert. He is a sensitive boy. He understands the
innate goodness of each of them in the warehouse and knows that they are stuck in a rut
from where they can never escape. He gets his college admission and is ready to quit,
but has mixed emotions about the warehouse and its employees. He has always hated
the place, but has admiration for his co-workers. He pays his tribute to the unyielding
human spirit:

Bert: I don’t understand how they come every morning,

Every morning and every morning,

And no end in sight.

That’s the thing – there’s no end!
Oh, there ought to be a statue in the park –

“To All the Ones That Stay.”

One to Larry, to Agnes, Tom, Kelly, Gus. (370-371)

As Bert leaves the warehouse and Kenneth sings for him “The minstrel boy to the war has gone” Miller proves to the world that the essentials do change, if only one has the courage to attempt it. Unlike in Waiting for Godot, at the end of this play somebody ‘moves’. Miller in his “Introduction” to Collected Plays:

I hoped to define for myself the value of hope, why it must arise, as well as the heroism of those who know, at least, how to endure its absence....
From this endless, timeless, will-less environment, a boy emerges who will not accept its defeat or its moods as final, and literally takes himself off on a quest for a higher gratification (49).

Life in the warehouse is tragic for Bert as long as he has to bear up with the nauseating, suffocating atmosphere and drudgery of mundane work, but it is a greater tragedy for the sensitive poet, Kenneth. He certainly belongs to a different world but is unfortunately stuck here, unable to make up his mind to join the civil service. “The only trouble is there’s no jobs open except for the guard in the insane asylum. And that’d be a nervous place to work, I think”(360), he says. It is an important choice to make, to watch over people who are insane or to work like a machine in a warehouse which would eventually make him insane, that is the question. Deadened by monotony Kenneth’s mind loses its grasp upon his chosen image of what he is and what he wants to be. As he opts to stay on, he gradually takes to alcoholism by the end of the play and as a result loses his poetic ability. It is a frightful identity crisis for the poet who
“stubbornly seeks human identity in an inhuman world” (Karl and Hamalian, 9). Kenneth, unlike Bert, is estranged from himself because he is trapped by a society that cannot fulfill his deepest needs.

Miller’s *A View From The Bridge*, set in the Brooklyn waterfront, recreates the Sicilian society along with its values and codes of conduct. Extremely interested in the lives of the Brooklyn longshoremen, especially of the Italian origin, Miller has dramatized a story that he had heard from his longshoreman friend, Vinny Longhi. “When I heard this tale it seemed to me that I had heard it before, very long ago. After a time I thought that it must be some re-enactment of a Greek myth which was ringing a long-buried bell in my own subconscious mind. … The thought has often occurred to me that the two “submarines,” the immigrants, who came to Eddie from Italy, set out, as it were, two thousand years ago” (*Theatre Essays*, 67), says Miller in “On Social Plays” This is perhaps one of the reasons why Miller chose to give his play a touch of the ancient Greek Tragedy of the Sophoclean times.

The play initially was written in one act. Later Miller elaborated on parts of it to make it into two acts. Nevertheless, the play resembles a Greek tragedy in its length as well as in its plot construction. Miller says in his “On Social Plays”, “The form is what it is because its aim is to recreate my own feeling toward this tale – namely, wonderment. It is not designed primarily to draw tears or laughter from an audience but to strike a particular note of astonishment at the way in which, and the reasons for which, a man will endanger and risk and lose his very life” (*Theatre Essays*, 68). That is the reason why Miller made the play like “one single constantly rising trajectory, until its fall, rather like an arrow shot from a bow; …” (Roudane, 366).
Arthur Miller's
A View From The Bridge
directed by Belinda Ray

November 16, 17, 18 & 19
December 1, 2, 7, 8, 14
Fridays 8:00 pm
Sundays 4:00 pm

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Produced by
Alan Geffert & Belinda Ray
Parish Players Grange Theatre
The “play is a ‘view from a bridge’ not only because it is set in the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge, but more importantly because it tries to show all sides of the situation from the detached eminence of the external observer. Alfeiri is essential to the play because he is the bridge from which it is seen” (Welland, 78) says Dennis Welland. He is like the bridge, linking modern Brooklyn with ancient Sicily. He is like the bridge of time, the past and the present. He is the bridge between cultures, the immigrant-son lawyer who practices in Red Hook and tries to explain American law to the likes of Eddie Carbone, brought up in the traditions of Sicilian family and tribal loyalties and taboos.

The play begins with Alfieri, the lawyer, more like a Greek chorus, placing the play in its setting, “the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge.” (379) His opening remarks set the tone of the play when he says, “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.” (379) A world like this is governed by its own tribal law, the Sicilian code of conduct and honour; and not by the codified law of America. The narrator tells us, “there were many here who were justly shot by unjust men. Justice is very important here.” (379) The play deals with the lives of “Longshoremen and their wives, and fathers and grandfathers, ... the petty troubles of the poor” (379), and the occasional cases that the lawyer settles are all of similar nature. Life hasn’t changed in this part of the world for ages hence as to Alfieri a “thought comes that in some Ceasar’s year, 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.” (379) The play, from its very beginning, smacks of an impending disaster, very much like a Greek play. And Alfieri, like the chorus in Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex, cautions us at the very outset.
As the play begins Miller lets the audience see the epicenter of the conflict in the play building up: from the very first scene the playwright shows us Eddie's strong feelings towards Catherine. When Eddie disapproves of her waving at the other longshoremen, or dislikes her new style of dressing and hair-do, or refuses to allow Catherine to go to work; he is more than being a protective father figure. The feelings that Eddie has for Catherine are on the extreme edge of the parental or avuncular behaviour and seem to spill over into taboo sexual desire. Eddie's wife has been a silent spectator to this growing attachment but when he disagrees to send her to work she speaks up; almost throwing her arms up and saying, enough is enough!

Beatrice: ... Think about it a little bit, Eddie. Please. She's crazy to start work. It's not a little shop, it's a big company. Some day she could be a secretary. They picked her out of the class. ... What are you worried about? She could take care of herself. She'll get out of the subway and be in office in two minutes.

Eddie, ....: I know that neighbourhood, B., I don't like it.

Beatrice: Listen, if nothin' happened to her in this neighbourhood it ain't gonna happen noplace else. ... Look, you gotta to get used to it, she's no baby no more. Tell her to take it. ... You hear me? (She is angering.) I don't understand you; she's seventeen years old, you gonna keep her in the house all her life?

Eddie,(insulted): What kinda remark is that?

Beatrice,....: Well, I don't understand when it ends. First it was going to be when she graduated high school, so she graduated high school. Then it was gonna be when she learned stenographer, so she learned stenographer. So, what're we gonna wait for now? I mean it, Eddie,
sometimes I don’t understand you; they picked her out of the class, it’s an honour for her. (385-386)

Is Catherine aware of Eddie’s feelings, and does she encourage him in some way? Miller gives us several tell-tale signs to believe that “this too much love” is not one-sided either. The first time Eddie admires her skirt, she runs her hands over it, which could be quite suggestive. Even when Catherine lights a cigar for Eddie, the action, beyond the uncle-niece affection, has a more serious sexual meaning. Symptomatic of Eddie’s sexual ambivalence is his withdrawal from his wife. Beatrice and the audience understand, as Eddie does not, the connection between the cessation of conjugal relations and the transference of Eddie’s erotic feelings to Catherine. He himself, probably, does not quite understand what is happening to him. He is beset by incestuous passion, a love that dare not speak its name, a love he cannot, or perhaps, dare not recognize:

Eddie: What are you mad at me lately?

Beatrice: Who is mad ... I’m not mad. … You’re the one is mad (390).

Albert Wertheim comments in this context, “Alfieri and the audience, endowed with elementary Freudian literacy, understand it more clearly. But Eddie’s ignorance or willed ignorance creates a dramatic irony and complexity central to the tragic richness of the play.” (Bigsby, Companion, 110)

When Beatrice’s cousins, Marco and Rondolfo, arrive from Italy, things change in the Carbone household. Before they come, Miller portrays Eddie as a perfect host, feeling honoured to be chosen as one, enthusiastically waiting his guest’s arrival:
Eddie...: It’s an honour, B. I mean it. I was thinkin’ before, comin’ home, suppose my father didn’t come to this country, and I was starvin’ like them over there ... and I had people in America could keep me a couple of months? The man would be honoured to lend me a place to sleep.

Beatrice...: You’re an angel! God’ll bless you. ... You’ll see, you’ll get a blessing for this! (383)

Eddie’s Sicilian code of conduct requires him to protect the two illegal immigrants, and he emphasizes on the importance of ‘Omertà, the code of silence’ to his family. To impress upon them he narrates the story of Vinny Bolzano, who snitched his own uncle, and the consequences he faced:

Catherine: What, was he crazy?

Eddie: He was crazy after, I tell you that, boy.

Beatrice: Oh, it was terrible. He had five brothers and the old father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs – three flights his head was bouncin’ like a coconut. And they spit on him in the street, his own father and brothers. ...

Eddie...: Him? You’ll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How’s he gonna show his face ... Just remember, kid, you can quicker get back a million dollars that was stole than a word that you gave away.

(389)

Everything seems fine till the two immigrants actually arrive at Eddie Carbone’s house. Among the two, Miller describes Marco as “dark, swarthy, a regular bull... suspicious, tender... with a formal stiffness” (391). He is appreciative of Eddie’s kindness and is
serious about the work he can do in America as he needs money to take care of his wife and children struggling for life back in Italy. He is a hard-core realist, unlike his brother for he believes, "when you have no wife you have dreams" (395). In contrast Rodolpho is blond, handsome, cheerful, with a zest for life. He is a dreamer, who wants to stay on in America, earn lots of money so that he can buy a motorcycle in Italy. America for them is the ‘Eldorado’ that can provide everything that they require: the necessities of life for the responsible family man as well as the fanciful needs of the bachelor boy.

Eddie Carbone, from the very beginning, doesn’t feel comfortable with the look and talk of Rodolphe. When he says he is a singer, it interests Catherine but Eddie gets more uncomfortable. Finally, when he starts singing “Paper Doll” at Catherine’s behest Eddie gets jittery as Catherine enjoys:

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,
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 – (396)

The theme of the lyric is that the singer is going to buy a paper doll that other fellows cannot steal. The relevance to Eddie Carbone is striking as through the play Eddie
accuses Rodolpho of having stolen Catherine from him. Catherine is Eddie’s paper doll, Rodolpho is the flirty guy; and the interesting fact that the singer intends to “buy” a paper doll “parallels ... Eddie’s attitude that he has basic right to control Catherine’s actions because of the enormous personal sacrifices he has made to raise her”, says Arthur D. Epstein (Martin, 111). Later Eddie bursts out in frustration:

Eddie: 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, Jersy, 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 the city! ... And 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 takethe blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his dirty filthy hands on her like a goddam thief! (410)

The suggestive lyrics are sufficient enough to taunt Eddie. Eddie gets angered by Catherine’s interest and enthusiasm. From this point in the play one can sense Eddie is being consumed by jealousy. He asks Rodolpho to stop singing, orders Catherine to remove her high heeled shoes, and begins to look at Rodolpho with a suspicious eye.

Soon Catherine and Rodolpho start going out together, much to the dislike of Eddie. He makes his resentment quite clear to Beatrice. For him, Rodolpho is a ‘blond’, ‘he sings, he cooks’, he is ‘weird’, ‘he is like a chorus girl or sump’m’, he is an embodiment of
feminine qualities or something more objectionable, maybe a homosexual. Beatrice senses the jealous rages as Eddie accuses him making sly, damaging suggestions. Eddie’s accusation reveals a mind tortured by the fear that he is about to lose Catherine, and the more the distress, the more desperate he becomes to stop it. His discussion with Beatrice does not help for she has other worries to complain about other than interfering into the grown up adults’ personal lives:

Beatrice: When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?
Eddie: I ain’t been feelin’ good. They bother me since they came.
Beatrice: It’s almost three months you don’t feel good; they’re only here a couple of weeks. It’s three months, Eddie.
Eddie: I don’t know, B. I don’t want to talk about it.
Beatrice: What’s the matter, Eddie, you don’t like me, heh?
Eddie: What do you mean, I don’t like you? I said I don’t feel good, that’s all.
Beatrice: Well, tell me, am I doing something wrong? Talk to me.
Eddie:... I can’t. I can’t talk about it....
Eddie: I’ll be all right B.; just lay off me, will ya? I’m worried about her.
Beatrice: The girl is gonna be eighteen years old, it’s time already.
Eddie: B., he’s taking her for a ride!
Beatrice: All right, that’s her ride. What’re you gonna stand over her till she’s forty? Eddie, I want you to cut it now, you hear me? (399)

Desperate Eddie next tries to dissuade Catherine from getting into a relationship with Rodolpho:
Eddie: Katie... if you wasn't an orphan, wouldn't he ask your father's permission before he run around with you like this?

Catherine: Oh, well, he didn't think you'd mind.

Eddie: He knows I mind, but it don't bother him if I mind, don't you see that?

Catherine: No, Eddie, he's got all kind respect for me. And you too! We walk across the street he takes my arm --he almost bows to me! You got him all wrong, Eddie; I mean it, you --

Eddie: Katie, he's only bowin' to his passport.

Catherine: His passport!

Eddie: That's right. He marries you he's got the right to be an American citizen. That's what's goin' on here. ...The guy is lookin' for his break, that's all he's lookin' for.

Catherine: Oh, no, Eddie, I don't think so. (403)

In her confusion Catherine turns to Beatrice for solace and support, who pledges unconditional support to the young lovers. She also cautions Catherine not to send the wrong signals to Eddie:

Beatrice: Look, he'll say anything. What does he care what he says? If it was a prince came here for you it would be no different. You know that, don't you? ... So what does it mean? ...It means you gotta be your own self more. You still think you're a little girl, honey, ... You gotta give him to understand that he can't give you orders no more.

Catherine: Yeah, but how am I going to do that? He thinks I'm a baby.
Beatrice: Because you think you're a baby. I told you fifty times already, you can't act the way you act. You still walk around in front of him in your slip –
Catherine: Well I forgot.
Beatrice: Well you can't do it. Or like you sit on the edge of the bathtub talkin' to him when he's shavin' in his underwear....
I'm tellin' you, I'm not makin' a joke. I tried to tell you a couple of times in the last year... That's why I was so happy you were going to go out to work, you wouldn't be here so much, you'd be a little more independent. I mean it. It's wonderful for a whole family to love each other, but you're a grown woman and you're in the same house with a grown man. ... Just give him to understand, you don't have to fight, you're just – You're a woman, that's all, and you got a nice boy, and now the time came when you said good-by. All right?
Catherine: All right ...if I can.
Beatrice: Honey ... you gotta. (405-406)

Eddie's last resort is the lawyer, Alfieri; the law should be able to stop the impending disaster for him. When nothing else works, anxious and agitated Eddie approaches Alfieri hoping to get some legal help to end the affair. He makes his best efforts to have the assistance of Alfieri by proving to him that Rodolpho "ain't right"(407). The zeal with which he takes up his hostility to Rodolpho externalizes his own passion for Catherine:

Eddie: Mr. Alfieri, they're laughing 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 humour, see – which he's got – but that ain't what
they’re laughin’. ... But I know what they’re laughin’ at, and when I think of that guy laying his hands on her I could – I mean it’s eating me out, Mr. Alfieri, because I struggled for that girl.(408)

Try as hard as he might to convince the lawyer that Rodolpho is not the right guy, Alfieri cannot do anything till a case is proved against him. For the lawyer, there is no crime unless some law has been broken. His hands are tied for “there’s nothing illegal about a girl falling in love with an immigrant.”(VFB, 406) Moreover, Alfieri soon realizes, like the audience that the problem is not with the guy but with Eddie. The only thing that Alfieri can do for Eddie is to advice him to get rid of this too much love and “Let her go” (VFB, 409). Like the blind prophet Teireseas, Alfieri cautions Eddie over and over again.

Alfieri: Eddie, I want you to listen to me. ... 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. A man works hard, he brings up a child, sometimes it’s a niece, sometimes a daughter, and he never realizes it, but through the years – there is too much love for the daughter, there is too much love for the niece. ...

Eddie: What do you mean, I shouldn’t look out for her good?

Alfieri: Yes, but these things have to end, Eddie, that’s all. The child has to grow up and go away, and the man has to learn to forget. ... You did your job, now it’s her life; wish her luck, and let her go. (409)
Blinded by his obsession, Eddie refuses to look at himself in self-examination which might expose this underlying passion – an exposure Eddie cannot face, for he gets furious at the very mention of it either by Alfieri when he says,

**Alfieri:** She wants to get married, Eddie. She can't get married to you, can she? (410)

or when Beatrice alludes to the same:

**Beatrice:** You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her! (437)

Even as Eddie walks out of his office, Alfieri senses the inevitability of the tragic disaster awaiting the Carbone family. Miller tells us in an interview,

When I heard the story the first time – I never knew the man – it struck me even then how Greek it was. You knew from the first minute that it would be disaster. Everybody around him of any intelligence would have told Eddie that it would be a disaster if he didn't give up his obsession. But it's the nature of the obsession that it can't be given up. The obsession becomes more powerful than the individual that it inhabits, like a force from another world (Roudane, 366-367).

The play, in some respects is similar to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Eddie, like Oedipus cannot see the real cause of the disaster. Like Teiresias, the audience feel like telling Miller's hero, "Have you eyes,/ And do not see your damnation?" (Sophocles, 37). "Alfieri manifests the helplessness of ordinary humanity in the path of impending catastrophe." comments Benjamin Nelson (Nelson, 224); helpless in the hands of providence:
Alfieri: ...I knew then and there – I could have finished the story that afternoon. It wasn’t as though there was a mystery to unravel. I could see every step coming, step by step, like a dark figure walking down a hall toward a certain door. I knew where he was heading for, I knew where he was going to end. And I sat here many afternoons asking myself why, being an intelligent man, I was so powerless to stop it. I even went to a certain lady in the neighbourhood, a very wise old woman, and told her, and she only nodded, and said, “Pray for him…” And so I – waited here. (410)

Symbolically, Alfieri stands for reason while Eddie stands for passion. In the play Miller shows us the deficiencies of an impulsive man who acts without rationalizing. But the irony is that Alfieri, the rational being, a man of legal training, a symbol of wisdom and intellect in a semi-primitive society, is powerless to stop the onrush of the catastrophe in the play. Eddie Carbone’s fate is in the hands of God, for the only remedy suggested by the old lady is, “Pray for him”. How much like Greek tragedy!

From Alfieri’s office we shift to Eddie’s apartment where Eddie, unable to keep his cool any longer attacks Rodolpho personally as he steers the conversation toward women and morals. In his clipped style Marco states, “The women wait, Eddie. Most. Most” (412). When Rodolpho adds it’s “more strict” in their town, Eddie snaps,

Eddie: It ain’t so free here either, Rodolpho, like you think. I seen greenhorns sometimes get in trouble that way – they think just because a girl don’t go around with a shawl over her head that she ain’t strict,
Eddie seethes with anger as Catherine and Rodolpho dance to the tune of 'Paper Doll'. He offers to teach Rodolpho some manly art like boxing, and intentionally hurts him when Marco challenges him in lifting-the-chair game. The melodramatic scene ends as Marco shows his physical power with "the chair raised like a weapon over Eddie's head" (417).

In the second act, Catherine and Rodolpho discuss marriage. He proves to be a responsible man with integrity when Catherine poses her doubt whether he is marrying her for an American citizenship. In an emotionally charged speech he exclaims:

Rodolpho: Do you think I am so desperate? My brother is desperate, not me. You think I would carry on my back the rest of my life a woman I don't love just to be an American? (420)

Eddie returns home dead drunk and finds them alone in the house. When he asks Rodolpho to get out of the house in a fit of jealousy and anger Catherine snaps back for the first time, "I just can't stay here no more. ... Eddie, I'm not gonna be a baby any more!" (422) Outraged Eddie grabs Catherine and kisses her on the mouth. As Rodolpho flies at him in attack, Eddie pins his arms and suddenly kisses him. Probably, Eddie does this deliberately to prove to Catherine Rodolpho's lack of masculinity, but the two kisses "also bespeak Eddie's incestuous and perhaps homosexual passions", says Albert Wertheim (Bigsby, 111). Eddie does not recognize his motivation, this would mortify him. He must rationalize his act on moral grounds. So much is made of his adulterous and semi-incestuous drive towards his niece that we are apt to miss the
fact that “what is at stake is not the psychology of sexual turmoil but of duplicity, the man’s inability to live up to the obligations of comradeship. We must not force others to pay for our own weakness” (Corrigan, 149).

Malicious Eddie goes back to Alfieri for legal help. The lawyer repeatedly asks Eddie not to interfere but let Catherine go, “and bless her”. The only legal question in the case, he says, is the way the brothers entered the country, “but I don’t think you want to do anything about that.” (VFB, 409) As Eddie contemplates the betrayal, Alfieri reads his mind and warns him anxiously, “You won’t have a friend in the world, Eddie! … Put it out of your mind!” (424)

Provoked by his passion that he does not truly comprehend, Eddie names the names of Marco and Rodolpho to the Immigration Bureau, in the spur of the moment. In doing so, he breaks the unwritten law of the clan, Omertà, but complies with the written laws of the land. He forgets that he belongs first to the Sicilian community of Brooklyn and only then does he belong to America. Pushed to the extreme, he breaks the taboo of informing in order to closet the more intolerable taboo of incest. But, it is inconsequential against whom and why Eddie informs; the very act of informing is unforgivable and unforgettable in the Red Hook mind. Miller’s Eddie belongs to the society and he cannot disentangle himself from it. Estranged from his community he has no existence. As Miller puts it, “He’s in a society the way a fish is in the water, and the water is in the fish.” (Roudane, 295).

Marco’s spitting in Eddie’s face is a symbolic murder which foreshadows the act of murder at the end of the play. The spitting coupled with the public accusation, “That one! He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children” (433) emphasizes the imagery of theft. As against this accusation, according to Eddie,
Rodolfo has stolen Catherine; Marco has stolen his "good name". As Eddie screams, "I want my name, Marco"; Marco too wouldn't settle for half. He belongs to the primitive world, not "quite civilized", not "quite American". Marco wants Eddie punished for degrading his brother, robbing his children a healthy life, mocking his work. If the law cannot punish Eddie, Marco is ready to do it himself. Finally, the Sicilian justice is achieved, Marco stabs Eddie.

Miller portrays Eddie as a victim of his inner passion, a force much stronger than any external ones. Miller says in his "Introduction",

> The awesomeness of a passion which, despite its contradicting the self-interest of the individual it inhabits, despite every kind of warning, despite even its destruction of the moral beliefs of the individual, proceeds to magnify its power over him until it destroys him" (48).

Like Proctor, he dies for his name; and like Keller, the law of his own nature has forced him to break the law of the community. The perverse inner forces destroy man even more devastatingly than external forces like that of nature. When compared to Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, another modern tragedy written in the Greek style, Eddie's fall is a much greater one than the devastation that the helpless Aran islanders face when pitted against powerful forces of nature.

Eddie is a victim of his own freedom of choice. He is responsible for the choice that he makes. And unfortunately he makes the wrong one. For little does he remember in his fit of passion, that he has no existence outside his community.
The mind of Eddie Carbone is not comprehensible apart from its relation to his neighborhood, his fellow workers, his social situation. His self-esteem depends upon their estimate of him, and his value is created largely by his fidelity to the code of culture (Theatre Essays, 221).

Here is the angst and the fall of a man, estranged from the society and stripped of his social identity. Eddie, unable to face his own guilt succumbs to meaner ways of denying it and rushes to his fall. Miller asserts that the “pressure of the time’s madness is reflected in the strict and orderly cause-and-effect structure” of the play (Theatre Essays, 261).

Both the plays are, “at bottom reassertions of the existence of the community” (Theatre Essays, 260), says Miller. In Memory he portrays man’s sympathy for others – the finer feelings of the social man without which one loses one’s humanity. The characters in the warehouse are bound together with a sense of sharing a common fate even as one escapes it. Bridge shows us the other side of the same coin. What destroys Eddie Carbone, is the built-in-conscience of the community whose existence he has denied by betraying it. In both the plays, ultimately, there is a search for a kind of a moral order, without which man is in despair: a moral order that keeps a certain order in the society, enough to keep itself from barbarism.