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**Greek Tragedy – Miller  
Bc. Linda Chmelíková**

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## ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

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Jméno a příjmení: **Bc. Linda Chmelíková**  
Osobní číslo: **H11060**  
Studijní program: **N7503 Učitelství pro základní školy**  
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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

In this DP the relationship between tragedy and society should be a key theme throughout. Firstly, historically significant theories of tragedy (e.g. Aristotle, Hegel, Nietzsche) and should be briefly outlined using the specific examples of plays the theoretician uses. Next, more recent definitions of tragedy should be quickly discussed (e.g. Steiner), including even whether tragedy is even possible today, and if so what differences exist between 20th century forms of the genre and older forms. The next section should be a brief biography of Miller and an overview of his most important works - specific tragic elements in these works can be cataloged using the definitions from earlier chapters. Following this, a more specific analysis of the events in the play chosen should be undertaken. This should be the longest and most important part of the DP. In this analysis certain questions should be answered: Can this play in fact be called tragedy?, Is it some hybrid form? or Does it just contain tragic elements? Miller's own opinions about these questions should be researched as much as possible. Allegorical elements in the play should be analyzed, as well as how specific events in the play reflect and comment on both American society and on human failures in general. Other possibly tragic aspects to be considered in the work may be insider / outsider in a community, the position of a narrator in a play, gender roles as well as definitions of betrayal and loyalty.

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Vedoucí diplomové práce:

**Daniel Paul Sampey, MFA**

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.

děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this work is to focus on the tragic elements in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and determine whether the play meets the criteria and can be classified as Greek tragedy.

To reach the conclusions various theories and examples of tragedies are used. As Aristotle's *Poetics* has served as a guidebook for tragedies over the centuries, it functions as the underlying theory for this thesis. Miller, and other writer's opinions and definitions of tragic form will also be considered. Other important aspects such as historical and cultural background and social commentaries within the play are analyzed. In addition, where the play fits in the context of American drama at the time the play was written will be discussed.

## **KEYWORDS:**

Arthur Miller; *A View from the Bridge*; Greek tragedy; drama; Aristotle

## **NÁZEV**

Řecká tragédie - Miller

## **SOUHRN**

Cílem této práce je poukázat na prvky tragédie v díle *A View from the Bridge* (*Pohled z mostu*) amerického dramatika Arthura Millera a určit, zda tato hra splňuje požadavky a může být označena jako řecká tragédie.

K dosažení tohoto záměru práce používá teorie a příklady řeckých tragédií. Dílo antického filosofa Aristotléla *Poetics* (*Poetika*) již po staletí slouží jako průvodce tragickou formou a proto je základní teorií pro tuto práci. Mimo tento spis jsou zvaženy názory a pojetí jak antické, tak moderní tragédie, například samotného autora této divadelní hry, ale i jiných filosofů. Dále práce rozebírá a poukazuje na ostatní aspekty díla *Pohled z mostu* jako historické a kulturní okolnosti, nebo společenské komentáře. Kromě toho se také zaměřuje na situaci americké divadelní scény v době, kdy tato hra vznikla.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Arthur Miller; *Pohled z mostu*; řecká tragédie; divadlo; Aristotléles

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most fundamental value of tragedy is generally considered to be the life of an individual. In Greek tragedy the main characters are royalty or otherwise possess great status. In Arthur Miller's tragedies, however, the virtues are expressed in the characters of his middle or working class heroes.

Miller admits that in a sense all his plays are autobiographical (Miller 1977, Biographical Notes vii). Even when the playwright's name became worldly known, he chose to remain an ordinary citizen, much like Willy Loman, a character of one of his most appreciated plays and modern example of tragedy *Death of a Salesman*, or Eddie Carbone, the hero of *A View from the Bridge*. In his essay on tragedy, Miller adverts to the fustiness of the tragic mode and believes that nowadays the subject of tragedy is more likely to be a common man than a royal personage. Nevertheless the emotional situations the hero finds himself in can be applied to both.

The struggle of an individual attempting to gain his "rightful position in his society" is the underlying feature of both ancient Greek and modern tragedy. Whence it follows that tragedy in the modern times presents an image of a "common man" ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) no matter what his origin, color, or social status. Some philosophers though, such as George Steiner or Friedrich Nietzsche, argue with Miller's democratic idea of tragedy and designate the tragic form as extinct due to the mediocrity of the subject matter of contemporary stories.

Through the centuries Aristotle's *Poetics* has been the milestone among the tragic theories. By applying this set of rules proposed by the Athenian philosopher to a work of art, it can be quite securely established whether the work represents a tragedy or not. Yet although this may be the most common way to guarantee the definition of the tragic form, this problematic is not so cut and dry.

This thesis concentrates on possibilities and various perspectives which confirm that Miller's attempt to write Greek tragedy was largely successful. Even though the *Poetics* will be the underlying theory throughout this thesis, other philosophers' ideas regarding both classical and modern tragedy will be considered. Furthermore, the opinions of Miller and his contemporaries will be dealt with, which brings a new perspective to the

analysis of *A View of the Bridge*. Besides this, themes of the play such as an individual in society and betrayal will be analyzed, and similarities of *A View* to other modern and classical tragedies will be discussed. Allegorical meanings and social criticism which appear in the play will also be mentioned. By applying these strategies, the tragic elements of *A View* which Miller best mastered will be pointed out, as well as the inadequacies. The overall aim of this thesis is to establish whether *A View from the Bridge* satisfies the criteria and can be classified as Greek tragedy.

## **2. TRAGIC THEORIES**

Aristotle is probably the most influential philosopher amongst those who defined tragedy. In the *Poetics* he proposed the structure and form tragedy should observe and it also serves as a kind of manual for tragic playwrights. As the *Poetics* highly serves the purpose of this work, it will be given the greatest attention in the theoretical part of the thesis. Moreover, Hegel's definitions of the tragic form also belong to those that are necessary to introduce, again for the sake of the analysis. Furthermore, Friedrich Nietzsche's conceptions from *The Birth of Tragedy* will be given space in the theoretical part and will be used in the analysis of *A View from the Bridge*. Other writers who dealt with the subject of tragedy, such as George Steiner and Northrop Frye, whose ideas will be mentioned marginally in the analysis, will be briefly outlined. The aim of this chapter is to introduce and analyze the conception of tragedy of the above mentioned writers and philosophers, with particular stress on Aristotle's *Poetics*.

### **2. 1 Aristotle Poetics**

The origins of Tragedy are obscure. However, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (383-322 BC) claims that Tragedy evolved from Dithyrambs (songs in honor of Dionysus) but overcame many changes until it stopped in its "natural form." Aeschylus, for instance, added the second actor and reduced the number of people in the Chorus. Sophocles casted a third actor and scene-painting. Tragedy used to run in iambic tetrameter which was later replaced by trochaic. The actors wore masks and impersonated heroes (Butcher 9).

Aristotle claims that tragedy, comedy and poetry are "modes of imitation" (Mimesis) but they differ from one another in "manner, medium and objects of imitation." The manner of imitation can be either by narration (song and diction) or presenting characters as living and moving before us. The arts imitate life through "rhythm, language and harmony." Tragedy, together with comedy and dithyrambic and nomic poetry, employs all the above mentioned means. The difference is that while poetry employs all means at the same time, tragedy only one and then another (Butcher 4). Moreover, a poet expresses the universal (unlike a historian), so the characters speak

and act according the “law of probability or necessity,” in other words what may or should happen.

Aristotle divided Tragedy in six parts that “determine its quality:” the Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Song. Further, he categorized this dramatic form according to the incidents and motives. The incidents from the beginning to the “turning-point to good or bad fortune” are called “complication,” following the second part “unraveling” which extends from the change to the end (Butcher 12).

Moreover, Tragedy is either Complex, containing Anagnorisis (Recognition scene) or/ and Peripeteia (Reversal of the Situation), or Pathic where the characters are driven by passion. Another type of Tragedy is Ethical, as the motives are ethical and lastly Simple. Aristotle suggests the best way is to combine all the elements, however, omit a “multiplicity of plots” (as in an Epic structure) (Butcher 28).

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. (Butcher 4).

### **2.1.1. The Plot and the Elements of the Whole**

The plot has a beginning, middle and an end. The first part of the plot is the one which does not follow anything, the second follows something and other actions follow it, and the last follows something “by necessity or a rule” and nothing follows it. A certain length of the plot is necessary for the sake of beauty. The length of tragedy used to be regulated by a water clock. However, Aristotle suggests the poet should create Tragedy upon the following.

[...] the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change [...] from good fortune to bad (Butcher 13).

The two key elements that are responsible for the change “from good fortune to bad” in a plot are Peripeteia (Reversal of the Situation) which often comes in combination with Anagnorisis (Recognition Scene). Plots are either simple or complex. The simple is described as the one where the change of fortune happens with neither Peripeteia, nor Anagnorisis. In the complex plots, on the contrary, the change of fortune is accompanied by either one of them or by both. In addition, it is important for the complex plot that the changes happen according to the rule “Propter hoc or post hoc” (because of this or after this) (Butcher 17).

Peripeteia represents such change of action that veers to the opposite. Anagnorisis is a change when the truth is discovered between two persons who are destined for good or bad fortune (Butcher 22).

For Aristotle, the best kind of Recognition is when it is combined with Reversal of the Situation. In Sophocles’s *Oedipus the King*, Recognition occurs when Oedipus learns about his origins. Consequently the Reversal of the Situation appears and causes his self-destruction (Butcher 18). While Oedipus’s change from ignorance to knowledge is caused by a set of coincidences, other “least artistic” forms are employed by poets, such as Recognition by signs. Some of the signs are inborn while other acquired, e.g. “bodily marks” or “external tokens.” Other types of Anagnorisis are expressed by a memory of some object which awakens feelings when seeing it, or “process of reasoning.” Moreover, the Recognition must happen between persons, so that one is recognized by other or the recognition happens on both sides. An example of such recognition is when Orestes learns about his sister Iphigenia from the letter, yet Orestes is made known to Iphigenia later (ibid 18).

When Peripeteia and Anagnorisis are mixed together it will produce pity or fear. Recognition happens either in the way that one person is recognized by the other or the recognition happens on both sides. What follows is the “Scene of Suffering”, described by Aristotle as “[...] a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like” (Butcher 18).

Aristotle calls the above mentioned parts of the plot the “elements of the whole”. Nevertheless, the separate parts into which tragedy is divided are: The Prologue

(precedes the Parode of the Chorus), Episode (between the complete choric songs), Exode (no choric song follows), and finally the Choric Song which consists of two parts, namely the Parode (first “undivided utterance” of the Chorus) and Stasimon (the Choric Ode) (Butcher 8).

Furthermore, every Tragedy should contain Diction and Thought. Unlike action where the incidents do not need to be commented on, Thought can only be produced by speech. The subdivisions are “proof and refutation, the excitation of the feelings, such as pity, fear, anger and the like.” The other, Diction or the “art of Delivery,” includes what is for example – “a command, a prayer, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer and so forth” (Butcher 13).

### **2.1.2. The Tragic Emotions**

Actions happening between the characters should evoke certain emotions in its audience, namely pity and fear. To be capable to produce such an effect the action must occur between persons who are friends, or relatives, not enemies. They may be mother and child (Medea slays her children), husband and wife (Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon), etc. (Butcher 22).

Aristotle draws attention to “skillful handling” in the construction of the above. Firstly, the “deed” must be done consciously, knowing the persons, or in ignorance and the relationship is discovered later (Butcher 22). Oedipus, for instance, kills his father to later discover his bond with him. Secondly, an “irreparable” deed is about to be done in ignorance but the truth is discovered before it is done. This means that the deed is done consciously or unconsciously. Aristotle’s favorite is best demonstrated on the following example: “Cresphontes Merope is about to slay her son, but, recognizing who he is, spares his life” (ibid 23).

### **2.1.3. The Tragic Hero**

The objects of imitation are men in action. In Tragedy men are represented better than they really are (in comedy as worse than in real life). In Tragedy men are depicted as a higher and in comedy of a lower type (Butcher 20). The following rules are crucial when a character is developed: he must be “good” (with a good purpose and known for

his goodness), appropriate, “true to life”, and consistent. If there are any defects of character, they should be preserved but ennobled. Moreover, the hero must be “highly renowned and prosperous” like Oedipus or other persons with royal background (ibid 24).

Tragedy should imitate actions which excite pity and fear (Catharsis). “The change of fortune” (Peripeteia) presented must be “unmerited” so that it can happen to anyone at any time. The misfortune must be brought upon a man who is “good” and his lack of luck is due to some error. He must be a good man, however neither too prosperous nor miserable. Aristotle suggests that Catharsis is “purgation” (Butcher 11).

Another important quality the character must possess is what is called the “tragic flaw” or Hamartia. It is a kind of “sin” or “fault” (Barry 224). It brings inevitable, usually fatal, consequences to the character.

#### **2.1.4. The Language of Tragedy**

During his life, Aristotle also identified new uses of language. In the *Poetics* he comments on morphology and syntax. Tragedians imitate, objects either the way they are, or are said to be, or the way they should be. Modifications in language are done while imitating. They can be metaphors or “rare words”. He claims that the language used in Tragedy should be always up to date and accurate (Butcher 19).

### **2.2. Hegel’s Theory of Tragedy**

After Aristotle, the most studied philosopher who developed the theory of Tragedy is German G. W. F. Hegel (1770 - 1831). He recounted the ideas of tragic conflict and collision, the concept of suffering or fate, compared the ancient to modern Tragedy and more. In the following paragraphs I will introduce some of the main arguments of his *Theory of Tragedy* contained in F. H. Bradley’s *Hegel’s Theory of Tragedy* and Mark W. Roche’s *Introduction to Hegel’s Theory of Tragedy*.

For Hegel Tragedy is a conflict or collision of some kind between two “substantive positions”. These can be for instance feelings, modes of thought, desires, wills, or

purposes. Each of the conflicts is justified and yet wrong, and resolve into the fall of the hero. Hegel meets Aristotle in his definition that “tragedy is a story of unhappiness or suffering, and excites such feelings as pity and fear” (Bradley 1). Unlike Aristotle’s suffering which is quite undeserved, and brings about pity and fear, for Hegel the real feeling it evokes in audience is sympathy, which is unsatisfactory for Tragedy. He denotes that the collision caused by violating an “ethical substance” is not pitiful, however the audience can identify with the hero. He explains that the hero has to be aware of the consequences brought upon him by his action and for that reason the feelings of pity will not arise (celt.uwindsor.ca).

Miller’s hero Willy Loman, for instance, may be a representative type of the argument above. Willy perceives himself as a victim of a harsh society rather than having to accept his own part in his unhappiness, which is his inability to be satisfied with the things he has rather than feel distressed over those he does not.

Furthermore, Hegel puts great attention in his work on the tragic conflict, which is in contrast with Aristotle’s “Hamartia,” which came to be known as the “tragic flaw,” and represents the fatal defect of the character (Butcher 224). In Hegelian Tragedy the term is narrowed to a conflict between powers ruling the world of man’s will and action – his “ethical substance”. The most common and powerful is when the two poles are the family and the state because the powers are “equally justified.” By observing one side the hero violates another and the conflict resolves with his fall, usually being death, and the tragic effect is fulfilled (Bradley 4). Moreover, the richest form of Tragedy is when the collision arises between two goods. A less dramatic form is “an internal collision.” Even though it preserves the rhetoric and monologues of tragedies it shows the indecisiveness and therefore weakness of the character (celt.uwindsor.ca). In some cases the collision is caused by mere fate. The instrument of fate means that the hero was just unlucky and misfortune was brought upon him by misfortune. This is called “external necessity.” Nevertheless, according to Hegel it lacks the need of “rationalization” and “reconciliation” that create deep tragedies (Bradley 9).

Regarding a comparison of the ancient and modern Tragedy, Hegel favors the classical work of art. Firstly, he considers the variety of topics in modern Tragedy as greater; however, the conflicts are rather personal. Secondly, he objects that the “universal

interest” appears more in the ancient tragedies and only rarely and mostly only on background in modern ones. He criticizes the choice of fatal collisions because it appears to him that every “sufficiently striking character” is Tragedy material. Modern tragedians attach more weight to the character’s development in spite of obtaining the ancient simple one (Bradley 5). He does not seem to see the modern tragic heroes as universal as the classic ones, and he claims that they would not have been admitted in Greek Tragedy (ibid 6). The modern characters are very private and subjective in their heart and mind, he argues. Later, Nietzsche supports this proposition in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which will be later discussed.

Miller, on the other hand does not share Hegel’s opinion. In his essay *Tragedy and the Common Man* he fences modern tragedies and points out how worldly they are. He believes that the struggle of an individual for his legitimate position in his society is the same now as it was in history. Furthermore he denotes the likeness of the train of thought between people now and then (www.nytimes.com). After all, Willy the salesman wishes nothing more than to be accepted in the society and his death is nothing else but the result of his resistance

A. C. Bradley was the first who introduced the English-speaking world to Hegel’s theory. Bradley defends Hegel’s ideas, even though he sometimes speaks about the insufficiency of some of Hegel’s remarks, such as the “rationalization of the idea of fate” (Bradley 10). In some parts of the *Theory of Tragedy*, Bradley thinks, Hegel’s interest arises when he speaks about Sophocles’ *Antigone*, his favorite drama and the perfect exemplar of Tragedy. Indeed, the heroin of his favored Tragedy was in the conflict between family and state and having chosen her dead brothers over King Creon’s restriction, she violated the law and faced the consequences which resulted in (not only) her death.

### **2.3. Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy**

In this chapter I will outline the main thoughts of another German philosopher who also put his mind to Tragedy - Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He believed in the “Apollonian” and “Dionysian dichotomy.” According to this great thinker, there exist

two poles between which a human being always struggles. He considered Tragedy the highest form of art because it contains both. He was an admirer of the ancient Greek Tragedy and a critique of Euripides because, for Nietzsche, he ruined Tragedy. The following paragraphs analyze the main ideas from his work *The Birth of Tragedy*.

As mentioned above, Nietzsche believed that life always involves both the Apollonian and Dionysian. Without each other, the elements could not exist; neither of them would be fulfilled. Before Tragedy the Dionysian could be found in music and later it became the music of the chorus which gave rise to Tragedy. First, Tragedy was only a “choir” not a drama but later the god tried to show the existence to the eyes of the spectators. The audience was not supposed to see a human with a “clumsily fixed” mask but a vision born from their “intoxication” (Nietzsche 80).

The spectator should see a god. Moreover, Tragedy contains the contrast of styles – the speech, color, movement and dynamics of words in two “spheres of diction” – “the Dionysian lyrics of the choir” and “the scenic world of Apollonian dream” (Nietzsche 81). In the Apollonian part (the dialogue) of the Greek Tragedy everything looks simple, clear, and beautiful (ibid 91). For Nietzsche, there are two kinds of artists - the “artist of the dream” (the Apollonian artist), and of “intoxication” (the Dionysian artist) (ibid 45).

The two above mentioned elements existed during the time when Tragedy was dominated by Aeschylus and Sophocles. Then, when these two tragedians died, there was a time when Tragedy disappeared until it returned in its new form – with the “new tragedian” Euripides. He brought individualization which, for Nietzsche, represents the evil. “The individuals are comic, so non-tragic; this would mean that the Greeks could not allow individuals to the stage” (Nietzsche 92, my translation). Dionysus was the only “real existence” on the stage. Euripides brought up a new “attic” comedy from which a “perverse parallel to Tragedy” developed (ibid 98, my translation). The tragedian brought what Nietzsche calls a “spectator” to the stage, “a human being of everyday life”, who was not immortal. He claims that “Dionysus was driven away from the tragic stage by a demon who spoke from Euripides” (ibid 107, my translation).

In the time when Euripides lived, there was another great mind in Athens, a student of Plato, the philosopher Socrates. He admired Euripides' tragedies (even though Nietzsche writes that he could not understand Tragedy) and contributed to a development of a second "spectator" on the stage. It may have been for this reason that Nietzsche calls Euripides (among other names) a "Socrates' thinker." From this time the Dionysian was replaced by thoughts and the Apollonian by fire-effects (Nietzsche 109).

Before Socrates, the Hellenic world was ruled by myths and "naiveté". The naiveté was the "flower" of the Apollonian culture (Nietzsche 151) The Hellenes worshiped it. Then Socrates came, bringing reason, knowledge, and understanding to their world, and Tragedy was built on the "aesthetic Socratism" where everything had to be rational to be beautiful (ibid 110). The new opposite of Dionysian was "Socratism" and, for Nietzsche, Greek Tragedy died. It was too late to bring it back to life. Nietzsche finds another name for Euripides: "the sober" and for the poets "the drunk" (ibid 130). He rejects the "Greek cheerfulness" which walks hand in hand with the "theoretical man" and stands on the opposite side to "the Dionysian art and wisdom" (ibid 151) Moreover; he criticizes the "Deus ex machina" or "God from the Machine" which, according to the philosopher contributed to the destruction of tragedy (ibid 112). This tragic plot device is used in tragedies for external events and occupies the place of the irrational which happens outside the scope of tragedy (Butcher 24). Deus ex machine usually resolved complicated situations out of which would be otherwise no escape, as in Euripides's *Medea*, in which Medea slays her children and then escapes her punishment by being pulled up to the "sky." For Nietzsche, Deus ex machine create false comfort (ibid 112).

Although, Euripides's tragedies do not fall within Nietzsche's purview, the playwright's practices were certainly esteemed by others. Not only did he find admirers in the ranks of the Athenian theatergoers, but also with Aristotle himself.

## **2.4 Other Theories**

Another philosopher who explored tragedy is George Steiner. In his *Death of Tragedy* he declares that the tragic form is extinct. In his work he establishes a set of rules and based on these he eliminates "non-tragic" works. For Steiner the tragic plot must follow

a “providential script, whether that of the Greek oracles or that of the Christian God.” Moreover, Steiner rejects the modern tragic hero, who does not fall from a sufficient height. Therefore, he does not consider Willy Loman (the hero of Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*) a tragic hero because he does not occupy the “summit of the order” (Gillespie 154). Moreover, according to Steiner, Loman lacks the “sense of irrevocability.” Steiner claims that Willy’s distress could have been avoided if the social conditions had been reformed, which according to him would have been possible (<http://libserv23.princeton.edu>).

In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Northrop Frye claims the authenticity and universality of Tragedy. The literary theorist comments on theories proposed by philosophers through history on the tragic form. In addition, he also suggests his own characteristics of tragic elements. Some of his ideas will be used in the analysis of Miller’s tragedies.

Hegel claims that tragedy has been the “meeting point between the metaphysical and the poetic” since Plato ([www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)). Despite the fact that there have been many philosophic or artistic analyses of tragedy throughout history, Aristotle’s work is the one that has been used to distinguish the tragic form from the non-tragic for centuries. Hence Aristotle’s theory of tragedy will be used as the leading one in this thesis. Nonetheless other theories from this chapter, with their varied points of view, will be used to analyse Miller’s plays.

### 3. MILLER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Arthur Miller and other authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, and others are connected with the terms Modern American Drama or Modern Realism, sometimes also called Dramatic Realism (<https://sites.google.com>) The aim of this chapter is to examine selected O'Neill's plays in the light of their contribution to modern American drama (1910 – 1945) and their relation to Arthur Miller. Besides that, other comments on Arthur Miller's contemporaries will be mentioned with whom he crossed path or had some influence on his writing, using his autobiography *Timebends* as the main source.

Eugene O'Neill is believed to be the greatest contribution to American Theater ever. Since O'Neill, American drama has been an internationally respected art. Even though some of his ideas were borrowed from Europe, especially Greek tragedy, he "fashioned" them into the American idiom. He explored life and struggle of men. (Krasner 155) In his plays, he focused on "human relations" (ibid 144). "He examined the use of masks onstage, explored inner monologues, developed an American brand of expressionism, and firmly established American dramatic realism". He addresses death, sexuality, guilt, responsibility, and other universal topics in his dramas (ibid 142). He started the "hallmark of our serious drama," by "questioning American values and society" (Miller 1987, 432). O'Neill did not have to go far to seek inspiration for his dramas/masterpieces because his life itself was a tragedy.

O'Neill's "atypical" Broadway melodramas (*Anna Christie*) became traditional examples of modern American drama during 1920s and 1930s. The typical melodramas of that period relied on "imminent catastrophe, vivid spectacle, graphic pyrotechnics, and morally inambiguous landscape." The features distinguishing O'Neill's melodramas conclude "subtler intimacies, personal tragedies and psychological complexities." By this time he knew he wanted to create the modern American drama that would "rival" the European modernists' work (Ibsen, Strindberg, and Shaw) (Krasner 143).

Friedrich Nietzsche had a great influence upon O'Neill's writing. "Nietzsche's Dionysian philosophy of ritual and eternal recurrence" played an important role in "shaping O'Neill's plays." The playwright became fascinated by the modernist

movements and tried to apply them to his dramas (Krasner 144). “The influence of Nietzsche’s concepts,” e.g. the “gradual transformation of his optimistic appraisal of life into pessimism,” is apparent in the plays: *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, *Mourning Becomes Electra* and also *The Hairy Ape*, and *Desire Under the Elms* (www.jstor.org). O’Neill confirms that he considered Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* some of the “most stimulating books on drama ever written” (www.jstor.org).

Not only did Eugene O’Neill have experience with Greek tragedy and melodramas, but also became “immersed in the modernist movements of his time and applied them to his dramas” (Krasner 144). Some of them were for instance plays under the influence of the Harlem Renaissance dealing with “Negro life” (*The Emperor Jones*), comedies (*Ah, Wilderness*), etc. In the following paragraphs some of the O’Neill’s biggest contributions to the American theatre will be mentioned, including *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Long Days Journey into Night*, and *The Iceman Cometh*. The selection of the dramas is based on their similarities to Greek drama and to some of the dramas by Arthur Miller himself. Moreover, they will be supported by Miller’s commentaries from his interview in 1966 and his autobiographical work *Timebends* from 1987.

First of all, the life story of the playwright will be briefly introduced, as it is widely believed that it was an important aspect in shaping his plays. O’Neill was born in 1888 into a dysfunctional family who have suffered from the death of his baby brother Edmund, who died when he was a toddler from measles. His mother, who had been addicted to morphium ever since, blamed his brother James, who was 7 years old then for purposefully contaminating him and could never forgive him for that. His father was a promising Shakespearean actor. The youngest Eugene was an unwanted child. He grew up with lost illusions and faith. He drank heavily and was diagnosed with tuberculosis and until the breaking point which was when he had almost died in a Brooklyn bar, he was lost. After that dreadful experience he realized that he wanted to become a playwright, and started writing. “In 1920 his first play *Beyond the Horizon* opened on Broadway and changed the course of the American theatre.” His fear of becoming a commercial artist like his father gave rise to the first true American tragedy, and an “uncompromisingly” Greek drama (www.pbs.org).

Tennessee Williams said, after a performance of O'Neill's *The Long Day's Journey into Night* that "he gave birth to American theatre and died for it" (www.pbs.org). The play was staged two years after the playwright's death in 1953. It was an autobiographical tragedy with no death scene. The story revolves around Edmund and portrays a family in New England, where O'Neill lived during summers when he was a child.

This play is in a way similar to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, which was published and performed 8 years before *The Long Day's Journey into Night*. The two plays are examples of modern tragedies. Moreover they share the same family structure of a mother, father and two adolescent sons. Both families have financial and emotional issues, etc. However Miller claims no inspiration from O'Neill. Conversely, he said in an interview from 1966 that O'Neill had never meant much to him when he was starting out. Instead he was a "finished figure" in the forties. On the other hand, he admits that O'Neill's last play, *The Long Day's Journey into Night*, really was a masterpiece. (<http://theparisreview.org>)

One of the most "poignant" plays in American drama is O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. (Krasner 149) The tragic story revolves around Theodore Hickman called Hickey. Here O'Neill got the idea from his memories of the characters from the Brooklyn bar he had almost died in. The theme of the play is that every man must have illusions to survive in the world. The word illusion is given a name "pipe dream" in *The Iceman Cometh* which is evidently a "boozy delusion." "O'Neill makes the point that these delusions are necessary 'masks' worn by everyone, one way or another" (ibid 150). This illusion also is demonstrated by Miller's hero Willy Loman, whose delusions have a positive impact on his character on one hand, but on the other hand contribute to his downfall.

There was a time in 1920s when O'Neill was obsessed with masks. This might have been because he was hiding behind one himself, but he refers to them as the "freest solution of the modernist dramatist's problem as how – with the greatest possible dramatic clarity and economy of means – he can express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of psychology continue to disclose to us" (1932b: 64 in Krasner 148). He experimented with the original Greek tradition of characters wearing masks on stage in "varying ways" in his plays *All God's Chillum Got Wings*, *The Great God Brown*, *Marco Millions*, and *Lazarus Laughed* (Krasner

148). The masks in *The Iceman Cometh* are only metaphorical. The “pipe dream” mask is worn to “bolster self-confidence.” Hickey has worn a mask of a diligent husband, prosperous business man, and an entertainer in a local bar. Nevertheless his mask begins to wash off as the play develops. He had killed his faithful loving wife and his performance changes into a “deep investigation into the nature of guilt and irresponsibility driven to madness and a performance of madness as well.” His pretense moves to guilt and guilt back to pretense. “Like Hamlet, the ambiguity in Hickey’s performance creates twin levels of perception” (Krasner 150) He is trapped in his guilt and repeats the same as a mad person all over again like in a circle, until it gets narrower. Aristotle’s Catharsis is greatly depicted by the playwright. By hearing the same story with no escaping what is horrible the audience is devastated and the feelings of pity and fear arise. Miller comments on superb O’Neill’s technique in an interview from 1966.

He had one virtue which is not technical, tis what I call “drumming”; he repeats something up to and past the point when you say, “I know this I’ve heard this ninety-three different ways,” and suddenly you realize you are being swept up in something that you thought you understood and has drummed you over the horizon into a new perception. He doesn’t care if he’s repeating. It’s part of his insensitivity. (www.theparisreview.org)

Miller called O’Neill a “very intensive writer” for this technique, he even said that he had written with “heavy pencils” (www.theparisreview.org). On the other hand, in *Timebends*, Miller argues that this so called “deadly repetitiveness” sometimes “lulled” him to sleep. (Miller 1987, 228) Moreover, Miller claims that *The Iceman Cometh* and *The Long Day’s Journey into Night* would not have been successful at the time they were written. He admires his sense of timing without which, he says, a playwright must have to be respected. (www.theparisreview.org)

In 1947 *The Iceman Cometh* opened together with Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*. McCarthyism had not started yet and the United States was full of hopefulness about the “new organization of the world.” It was an atmosphere of “good will,” a term which was used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. O’Neill’s play was “filled with disasters.” “It corroborated what they were going to experience, and pretty soon after, it became very timely.” (www.theparisreview.org)

The last play by O'Neill to be analyzed is *Mourning Becomes Electra* where he attempts to modernize the ancient Greek story that had been, centuries ago, a popular theme for the biggest tragedians of all time. He chose the notoriously known story of Orestes and his sister Electra who want to revenge their father Agamemnon who was killed by their mother and her lover. Firstly, Aeschylus, later Sophocles followed by Euripides who wrote an up-to date version at that time. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there comes an American playwright with the same attempt. He chose to modernize the story in a trilogy (as Aeschylus's *The Oresteia*). Although O'Neill was criticized for turning back to the classical styles, he did not give up and wrote back to one of the drama critics "Greek criticism is as remote from us as the art it criticizes. What we need is a definition of Modern and not Classical Tragedy by which to guide our Judgments" (Krasner 149). The story revolves around a Northern family after the Civil War.

In the first play, Brigadier General Ezra Mannon returns home only to be murdered by his wife, Christine, for his infidelity and her passion for another man. The remaining two plays concern the revenge of the daughter, Lavinia, and her brother, Orin. Revenge is the motivation, but guilt consumes the characters. (Krasner 149)

In *Timebends*, Arthur Miller comments on Eugene O'Neill's contributions to the American theatre. In the middle 30's his work seemed to him rather "archaic" with the "mawkish 20's slang, along with the deadly repetitiveness." Until an "entirely opposite side of him emerged" – and by that he means when his "disgust appeared more absolute" - he seemed as the playwright of the "mystical rich, of the high society and the Theatre Guild<sup>1</sup> and escapist 'culture'" (Miller 1987, 228). "It was O'Neill who wrote about working-class men, about whores and the social discards and even the black man in a white world, [...]" (ibid 229).

O'Neill was not a "force" anymore when Miller was starting ([www.theparisreview.org](http://www.theparisreview.org)). However, Miller finds similarities between himself and another dramatist of the same period, Tennessee Williams. Even though, the Greek theatre was beyond Williams's interest, he and Miller shared the same approach towards the position of American

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1. New York theatrical society found in 1918 for the production of high-quality, noncommercial American and foreign plays. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/590271/Theatre-Guild>)

theatre. Miller recalls “I could not imagine a theatre worth my time that did not want to change the world” (Miller 1987, 180). Also, Miller speaks about Williams’s help when he showed an interest in the waterfront (setting for *A View for the Bridge*). Williams listened to Miller’s descriptions and seemed touched and moved by particular person and words (ibid 155). He belonged to a “minority culture and understood in his bones [...]” (ibid 180). Moreover, he helped Miller “strengthen” another character, William Loman, by printing a “license to speak at full throat” (ibid 182). It is visible from Miller’s autobiography that he felt closer to Williams by calling him by the first name, Tennessee, throughout the book, unlike his other contemporaries.

In his autobiography, Miller quite frequently comments on another playwright, his contemporary Clifford Odets, however, with certain distance. He mentions not only his writing but also, and more importantly, his political beliefs. That is because, he claims, writers in the 1950s were estimated by what they “stood for rather than what they were actually doing, by the critical propaganda surrounding them rather than by their literary deeds” (Miller 1987, 228). Odets was “quite advertised in that period” (ibid 232). “He was an American romantic, as much a Broadway guy as a proletarian leader, probably more so” (ibid 229).

Miller perceived Odets as the opposite of O’Neill; he seemed “pure, revolutionary, and the bearer of light.” Nevertheless it was “by virtue of his commitments to socialism and the Soviet idealization” (Miller 1987, 228). O’Neill, on the other hand, was not “part of any political movement, at least not since his socialist youth.” Except for his political beliefs, Miller observes that with his plays, “For the very first time in America, language itself had marked a playwright as unique” (ibid 229). Odets’s plays “encourage audience identification with protagonists who seek solace from their economic, social, and political conditions” through his sensational ability to “craft New Yorkese dialogue” (Krasner 114). He created characters that stood for their social and political beliefs with passion and lyricism.

Odets was also known as a representative of playwrights who had experimented with melodrama. The American drama of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely given to melodramas (Krasner 19). It is a genre of plays that was typically “overflowing with emotions, set in mysterious locations, and peopled with

stereotypical characters: heartless villains, heroines in distress, and strong heroes who faced almost insurmountable odds in rescuing those heroines” (<http://www.referatele.com>). Having its roots in France, it was full of music. American writers replaced the French intrigues by American themes and character types. It represented a genre with an “opposition between good and evil, in which good prevails” (<http://method.vtheatre.net>). Again the topics of melodramas are universal and applicable to our everyday lives even now; however the end is not only the good defeating the bad. Like in tragedy the ridiculous circumstances are necessary to maintain the plot, which is more active and dynamic in melodramas and there is a higher emphasis on emotion. Typical American themes for melodramas were “political and business climate” or “commentary on the undermining of America’s Reconstruction,” urban life, class and ethnicity, etc. (Krasner 8 - 20). The subgenres of melodrama were for instance: domestic, romantic, frontier, comedy, mystery or even exotic melodrama and others (ibid 80 - 82).

As Miller himself admits, there was a strong competition amongst playwrights in the 1950s, especially the political one. Even though both Miller and Lillian Hellman were on the left, he admits to fear her and wishes he would never “really cross her” (Miller 1987, 258). “I believed she deeply resented my success” (ibid 251) He could never see himself being comfortable friends with any of his contemporaries because of this competition. However, he commendably claims he had won the competition anyway. Due to this opinion he never felt such hostility towards them as they did to him (ibid 236). Hellman’s work did not seem to him to be “impassioned” or “challenging” but he admired her elegant dialogues that “set her apart from the theatre of protest.” She was “preeminently Broadway.” Her political commitment was obvious in her plays. In the 1930s her work addressed “socioeconomic concerns.” Conversely to Odets though, her “strike play was stilted and didactic” (ibid 231). Hellman considered herself to be writing, in her words, a “dramatic comedy” (New York Sun December 16, 1949, qtd. in Krasner 118). However, she employed “dramaturgical structure and utilized elements of melodrama” (Krasner 118).

#### 4. INFLUENCES ON MILLER'S WRITING

O'Neill was the serious voice of American drama, Odets the didactic and Hellman the political, Arthur Miller himself was regarded as the moral voice of realism in 1950s American theatre. Not only did other playwrights regard Miller as a moralist, he himself admits in his biography that to him "amoral art was a contradiction" and that "an artist was obliged to point a way out if he thought he knew what it was" (Miller 1987, 145). The narrator of *A View from the Bridge*, Alfieri, who is the representation of an imaginary bridge standing between the good and the evil, serves as a good example. Even though Eddie's thoughts and actions are sinful Alfieri keeps reminding readers what is right and wrong. The struggle between man's moral self esteem and passion is also apparent in *The Crucible*.

Miller adored Russian literature, especially Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Nevertheless, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen had the greatest influence upon Miller (Miller 1987, 145). In 1950 Miller wrote an adaptation of Ibsen's 1882s political play *An Enemy of the People*. The story revolves around a physician Dr. Stockmann, who discovers a serious health threat in the Baths of his Norwegian town. Even though the setting is 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian coastal town it has, like most Miller's plays, both "contemporary relevance and moral depth" ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)). Miller, however, shared more than a structural similarity with Ibsen; he also embodied the tragic spirit of Sophocles, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In his autobiography *Timebends* Miller highlights and is especially proud of the universality of the issues of the play that triggered his career *All My Sons* (1947). Having had wide-world success, Miller travelled overseas to see various productions of the play. After its success in Israel Miller's curiosity was aroused and he could not resist but ask the Prime Minister, who was also present at the opening, why he had thought it was so.

Because this is a problem in Israel – boys are out there day and night dying in planes and on the ground, and back here people are making a lot of money. So it might as well be an Israeli play (Miller 1987, 135).

There, Miller remembers, it "crossed" his mind that there could be something of a "tragic nature" to lives of people then who were "capable of putting a whole world to a

moral test, challenging the audience itself” (Miller 1987, 135). In his essay *Tragedy and the Common Man* (1949) for *The New York Times* Miller compares the archaic, noble and elevated men, the heroes of the classical Greek tragedy to the average or common man of today’s world. He argues that even today’s man can be a tragic hero in every sense because he is capable of the same emotions that underlie the struggle in tragedy , which is of an individual attempting to gain his “rightful” position in his society; i.e. the struggle of Orestes or Willy Loman, the hero of *Death of a Salesman*, both struggling against the oppressive world (www.nytimes.com).

Further, Miller claims, Tragedy is the “consequence of a man’s total compulsion to evaluate himself justly.” Such progress beyond the common man has been demonstrated in revolutions around the world. The “enlightenment of Tragedy” is then, according to Miller, “the discovery of the moral law” (www.nytimes.com). The incidents in both *All My Sons* and *Oedipus* symbolize, according to Miller, the “return of the repressed,” here represented by the letters, which cause the reversals of the situations in both plays (Miller 1987, 134). The tragic end of the amoral character of Joe Keller, the hero of *All My Sons*, is urged by mere combination of coincidences, similar to those in *Oedipus the King*; chiefly because both painful revelations of the truth come from long hidden letters. *All My Sons* was initially not well received by the critics and public mainly due to the fact that coincidence plays a crucial role in the play. This made Miller wonder what contemporary criticism would have made of Oedipus, an orphan, brought to his born town and accidently becoming a king only to later realize that he was the son of his wife, the Queen and the killer of his father, the King. At a key moment in *All My Sons*, Annie, a visitor at the Kellers’ house and the ex-fiancé of their son Larry, who is presumed dead and current fiancé of his brother Chris, discloses the truth about Larry by presenting a letter that Larry wrote to her before he died. Not only is it a proof that Joe, a successful businessman, caused the death of anonymous soldiers, but more importantly the death of his own son, who, after realizing what his father did, committed suicide.

Miller states that *All My Sons* “exhausted” his lifelong interest in the “Greco-Ibsen form” (Miller 1987, 144). Miller explored the tragic form again, though, in another early work, his “*Italian Tragedy*” which tells a story of Red Hook community, *A View*

*from the Bridge* (ibid 325). Working for minimum wage in factories and later the waterfront in the city he was born and grew up in, New York, Miller had often listened to the stories of the long shore Italian community members (ibid 146-147). There he met his good friend Vinni Longhi, whom he later travelled to Sicily with to seek inspiration for a *A View*. Miller speaks about this early urge to write about the Italians.

I would love to find some way of writing about this sealed-off area of the city [...] a dangerous and mysterious world at the water's edge that drama and literature had never touched (Miller 1987, 149).

He sensed the tragic nature of the tale he heard.

Longhi mentioned a story he'd recently heard of a longshoreman who had ratted to the Immigration Bureau on two brothers, his own relatives, who were living illegally in his very home, in order to break an engagement between one of them and his niece. The squealer was disgraced, and no one knew where he had gone off to, and some whispered that he had been murdered by one of the brothers (Miller 1987, 152).

Miller dedicated himself to this "Italian project" and ended up travelling to Italy with Longhi "a trip whose echoes would inform much of my life to come" (Miller 1987, 153). This experience gave him more than courage, since he was determined to write "as intimately about Italians as it would demand" (ibid 164). He learned to understand the difference between American and European cultures, the importance of family and friends, and the intensity of their betrayal, for which consequences can be as tragic as in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *King Lear*.

Not only did he learn Italians' sense for community life but also their vernacular, which helped him write about them authentically. However, Miller had not known that it would be the story of betrayal of the illegal immigrants' relatives that he was going to write about until he experienced the feeling of standing in the middle of an ancient Greek theatre in Sicily. He felt the difference between the "private" American theatre and the "universalities of fate" of the Greek (Miller 1987, 176). Finally the young actors from Group Theatre asked him for a one-act play for their Sunday performances. Miller was delighted. He enjoyed not having to worry about the commerce, associated with e.g. Broadway Theatre, which had held him back from finishing his drafts. First, he finished his one-act play *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), a kind of elegy for the years he worked in an auto parts warehouse. Miller expresses the satisfaction he gained

as he wrote about the subject of the Depression and the struggle to survive, which nobody wanted to “confront” (ibid 353).

Later that year he finally finished his “old *Italian Tragedy*” which he had been worried over for years. Thanks to the “impromptu” group of actors he finally took courage to finish his project as

[...] a one-act with a single rising line of intensity leading inevitably to an explosive climax. For this informal production, *A View from the Bridge*, which I had been worrying over for years as a projected full-length play for the Broadway theatre, now came to hand in 10 days (Miller 1987, 353).

The play was written in verse. Two years later, Miller finished the full length version where he opened up the viewpoint of Beatrice, Eddie Carbone’s wife, “toward his gathering tragedy” (Miller 1987, 419).

When exploring tragedy, Miller held to the moralist inside him, and chose to use a narrator, a figure which sustains a similar role as the Chorus in Greek tragedies. His narrator sets up the moral centre in the play by his philosophical comments such as “There are times when you want to spread an alarm, but nothing has happened,” or his foreseeability at the beginning of third scene, Act One, “Who can ever know what will be discovered?” (Miller 1960, 64, 29) It is interesting to mention that in addressing the audience and twiddling with their thoughts, the narrator aims for their sympathy. This instrument not only corresponds with the moral purpose of the play, but induces pity, together with fear an important feeling for tragedy.

The Greek influence on Miller’s plays is not only visible *A View from the Bridge*. In *The Crucible* (1953) Miller also explores the concept of betrayal. This time it involves the accusations of friends, which have fatal consequences for the whole town and its residents. In *The Crucible*, Miller reacts to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings in 1950s America. He was himself summoned before the HUAC but refused to name those with whom he had been in left-wing meetings in the 1930s (Milligan 9). The conclusion of the witch hunts in the play has the force of Tragedy and morality, typical for the playwright.

Apart from a moralist, Miller was also a realistic writer. Like in *A View from the Bridge*, in *Death of a Salesman*, the main character Willy Loman had lost his expectations of the American Dream. The harsh society and the hunt for money more than for the respect of people brings the disappointed salesman to despair, which later ends in his suicide. Miller's characters come across the stage as believable, living people, depicted in their struggle to be at one with society. Miller's plays move the audience with pity for the protagonists as they witness their path to self destruction, often caused by dramatic irony, a device typical for Greek tragedies.

## 5. MILLER'S TRAGEDIES CLASSIFIED

In his early writing career, Miller contributed to the American theatre with not only realistic plays. In some of the plays he experienced with form. In *Death of a Salesman*, for instance, the playwright employs a kind of “superconsciousness” in shaping Willy’s character, which becomes the key element in the play (Miller 1987, 182). To illustrate, Willy envisions his dead brother Ben and they carry conversations together. Willy’s daydreaming about his past overwhelms his mind and mingles with the present, so it seems as the actions are happening at the same moments. Fascinated by the common features of the Salem hearings in 1692 and the HUAC hearings in Washington which were just beginning, Miller started an allegorical play, *The Crucible*. Devoted to depicting Puritan society in a different perspective, he researched records and artifacts in the museum of the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts. “The main point of the hearings, precisely as in the seventeenth-century Salem, was that the accused make public confession” (ibid 331). *All My Sons* is the most realistic play amongst these three and it is responsible for Miller’s recognition as a playwright (ibid 138)

Despite the differences within the plays, what they are generally believed to have in common is their form – tragedy. In this chapter I will analyze the tragic elements of the plays using the work of Aristotle. Moreover, I will comment on the way Miller criticizes American society in them.

According to Miller, the above listed plays are socially truthful (Miller 1987, 396). Among the communal themes that are commented upon are American society and illusions, business, war, loyalty, betrayal, success and the American dream. Even though the plays deal with specific problems and times in history of the United States, the issues raised are universal. Moreover, except for *Death of a Salesman*, they are based on real events.

*All My Sons* was written and performed during the war and Miller hoped for the play to “[...] explode, most especially in the face of the business community with its self-advertised but profitable patriotism – and of the Communists!” (Miller 1987, 238) As he expected, shortly after the release of the play, the accusations began, not only about the technical aspects of the play (slipping defects past army inspectors), but also on the

play being “Communist propaganda,” and later marked as “Party line propaganda vehicle” and above all that it was perceived as “outrageous.” Ironically, after the war was over, *All My Sons* was praised for “its courage, its insights, and its truth” (ibid 324). Besides the war issues that are bound to the time when the play was released, Kate Keller’s suffering, Joe Keller’s guilt and escape from responsibility along with his quest for fame and success are universal, as are Chris Keller’s hypocrisy when he judges his father for what he did but at the same time not opposing the idea of inheriting the corrupted business.

Another great success for Miller was *Death of a Salesman*. Willy Loman, the main hero, represents a broken man, struggling for a place in the society he is no longer part of. He has outgrown the age when he had a chance for a successful career. Willy’s desires for fame and success, not only for him but also for his sons, in the end destroy him. People often find symbolism in “Low-man,” as he embodies a working class character. Miller does not share this opinion though; for him the name came from a film he once saw (Miller 1987, 178). Willy’s character is representative of the world.

The Chinese might disapprove of his lies and his self-deluding exaggerations as well as his immorality with women, but they certainly saw themselves in him. And it was not simply as a type but because of he wanted. Which was to excel, to win out over anonymity and meaninglessness, to love and be loved, and above all, perhaps, to *count*. When he roared out, “*I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!*” it came as a nearly revolutionary declaration[...] (Miller 1987, 184).

*Death of a Salesman* had almost revolutionary effects upon the Chinese and the author was surprised to see what kind of value the moral message of the story had upon the culture, so distant from the American one, depicted in the play (Miller 1987, 184). The subject of people dreaming for money, fame or success is definitely relevant to people of whatever color, origin, nationality, or status in the world.

Both *Death of a Salesman* and *All My Sons* are family and society-central plays. Another play in which community plays crucial role is *The Crucible*. In this social-critical allegory on McCarthyism, Miller calls attention to the prejudice of the hearings. The female villain of the play, Abigail opposes the wife of her lover and plots against her by creating evidence that prove her practices of witchcraft. This causes a chain reaction and, ironically, the whole society watches and applauds her fight against sins.

Abigail takes advantage of the believing and obeying Puritan co-inhabitants, and they follow her. The citizens of the town lay hold of the situation and try to get rid of their longtime enemies by denouncing them as witches, which leads to ruining the lives of the accused, either by hanging or being forced to the edge of the society.

The universal experience of a town where the shifts of interests turned quiet neighbors or decent churchgoers into enemies is applicable to events escalating in 1950s' America - the witch-hunt. In the modern investigations, the summoned could not only destroy their enemies or competition, but also their friendships and relations, such as the one between Miller and Kazan.

Expressing the universal is an essential feature for not only moralists, as Miller himself, but also tragedians; however these roles are interconnected (Butcher 15). To prove that the plays rank as tragedies, I will analyze the heroes and the plot of the plays from the tragic perspective.

Firstly, the heroes will be introduced as they appear at the beginning of the plays, where, according to Aristotle, they must appear as good, with a good purpose, and renowned (Butcher 24). The only character that is renowned is Joe Keller in *All My Sons*, described in the Prologue as follows.

*KELLER is nearing sixty. A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a business man these many years, but with the imprint of the machine-shop worker and boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in many commonly known things, a man whose judgments must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense. A man among men (Six Great Modern Plays 358).*

The last sentence of the description is the most significant, as every tragic hero must be unique in his greatness. However, he also must be true to life, a quality which Keller also possesses. He can be compared to another Miller hero, John Proctor (*The Crucible*).

Proctor was a farmer in his middle thirties. He need not have been a partisan of any action in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites. He was a kind of man-powerful of body, even-tempered, and not easily led – who cannot refuse support to partisans without drawing their deepest resentment. In

Proctor's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly – and a Proctor is always marked for calumny therefore (Miller 1977, 154).

This quote's ending suggests the immediate symbolism of "Proctor" and his kind and calm character. Proctor indeed represents a man with rational judgment and courtesy. Further, it is pointed out that Proctor is well respected and even feared in Salem, and that he is a sinner but no "hint of this has yet appeared on the surface." When this sin is revealed it destroys his reputation, which makes it Proctor's tragic flaw.

The last hero is in a way different from the two above. His name is Willy Loman (*Death of a Salesman*).

*He is past sixty years of aged, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips—it might be "Oh, boy, oh, boy" (Miller 1977, 6).*

From this description, Willy is definitely not "on top of the wheel of fortune," as Frye claims he should be at the beginning (<http://www.archive.org>). Willy's dissatisfaction with his life is apparent even before he is given a chance to speak. The audience supports him when he looks forward to something, such as getting a better paid job or getting a decent job for his fancied son, Biff. In such times, Willy is very happy. He is an emotional man who is either on the top of the world or completely down. The audience pities Willy and feels compassion for him when he hurts.

Willy is probably the most representative type according to Miller's definition of a modern tragic hero on one hand, but on the other hand he is the least exemplary to Aristotle's. Miller states that "the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in his society" ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)). Surely, Keller and Proctor seem to have fulfilled their social statuses. Willy, however, is still trying even in his sixties to climb the social ladder. This is also his Hamartia, or the tragic flaw.

The closest to the Aristotelian tragic hero is Joe Keller. He is the most prosperous of all and appears as flawless at first. The truth about his imperfection is revealed later. As the story develops, it becomes apparent that Joe has been selling defective plane parts to the army and twenty young pilots have died, maybe including his own son. Joe is able to

live with such guilt, but he cannot cope with the fact that is revealed later, that his son, having learnt about what his father had done, has killed himself.

The last hero, John Proctor, stands between the definitions of Aristotle and Miller. John is prosperous, however the truth about his sins is soon revealed. Later in the play he struggles to gain back the place in the society he has lost. His adultery with the teenage Abigail brings fatal consequences upon him.

What brings the three men together is their tragic flaw, leading in all cases to fatal consequences, making all of them suicidal in a way, although only Joe and Willy go through with it themselves – Willy crashes his car and Joe shoots himself. Due to his stubbornness, John chooses death by hanging before giving up his own identity “How may I live without my name?” (Miller 1977, 275)

Peripeteia and Anagnorisis contribute to evoking the feelings of pity and fear in the audience, and they are parts of the plot (Butcher 12). In the following paragraphs the examples of both tragic elements will be described in the plays.

Firstly, Peripeteia (Reversal of the Situation) and Anagnorisis (Recognition Scene), occur in *All My Sons* at the same time, as usually happens. This is when the letter bearing the truth about Larry’s suicide is accidentally exposed. In *The Crucible*, the two elements appear, again at the same time, at the court hearing. There Proctor thinks he would protect his wife if he confessed his adultery, but Elizabeth wants to save him as well, so he lies to the court and the situations veers opposite from their expectations and the spouses are arrested. When Elisabeth learns the truth about Proctor’s confession she is mortified, similarly as when John learns about her pregnancy, which was a ticket out of prison. Lastly, in *Death of a Salesman*, Peripeteia and Anagnorisis happen at the same time as well. In this play, Willy awaits the good news about Biff’s new job, but having learnt that Biff has not only lied about this, but also stolen from his employer-to-be, he is devastated.

The combination of Anagnorisis and Peripeteia excites the tragic emotions, the “distinctive mark of the tragic imitation.” Furthermore, pity is aroused by “unmerited misfortune of a man like ourselves.” Undoubtedly, Miller must have aimed for the consciousness of American society. Virtuous men are brought by hubris from prosperity

to adversity by reaching too high until the rules or laws of the society stop them, a failure the heroes cannot bear. Therefore, Miller also satisfies the “moral sense” of tragedy. Moreover, hubris is the key concept in Greek tragedy (Butcher 20).

Clearly, neither of the heroes are typically Greek, as are the royal characters of Agamemnon, Oedipus, or Orestes. Nonetheless, Miller’s characters are closer to the general public, easier to identify with and their dreams and goals in life are accessible, they just are not fortunate enough to reach them.

In ancient Greece the tragic heroes often represented a deterrent example of those who disobeyed the gods. Consequently, their mortal souls were punished by the supernatural powers. Alternatively, heroes such as Oedipus tried to reverse their prophecy. He experienced the change of fortune because his parents were unable to cope with the prophecy, which brought catastrophic consequences upon them and their son. Northrop Frye describes the position of such characters in *Anatomy of Criticism*.

The tragic hero is very great as compared with us, but there is something else, something on the side of him opposite the audience, compared to which he is small. This something else may be called God, gods, fate, accident, fortune, necessity, circumstance, or any combination of these, but whatever it is the tragic hero is our mediator with it (<http://www.archive.org>).

Notwithstanding that the complications of the classical stories differ from Miller’s, the heroes all intended to be the same – to stand out of the crowd. Unlike the Greek heroes, the modern ones were punished by the charms of real life.

When experiencing Miller’s plays as a reader or spectator, one can expect heroes who struggle because they want to be unique in their society. Moreover, perhaps every human being can identify in his or her own way with Willy the dreamer, Joe the businessman, or John the polite farmer. When the dreams of these characters disappear, spectators pity them, and fear that such an undeserved catastrophe can happen to people like themselves.

To avoid the misinterpretation of the message of the playwright, attention should be drawn to the fact that Miller does not encourage his audience to be a face in the crowd but vice-versa, the crowd to accept the individual. For the qualities of the plays that are

specified in these chapters, the selected works of art can be definitely called tragedies; albeit modern, they contain Greek elements.

## 6. THE TRAGIC VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Miller considers *A View from the Bridge* his life achievement in terms of his exploration of Greek tragedy. Miller wrote the first version as a play as a one act in verse with a single rising line (Milligan 10). Moreover, he employed a narrator who fills the position of the Greek chorus, and other Greek elements. In the following chapters the fundamental features that characterize the play's tragic form will be analyzed and commented upon using the theories of tragedy outlined above. Furthermore, relevant examples of classical Greek Tragedies will be used and related context will be briefly introduced.

### 6.1. The Tragic Plot

Regarding the tragic elements as defined by Aristotle, the most important of all is the Plot or "the soul of tragedy." Tragedy is an "imitation of action that is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude" (Butcher 5). By "whole" it is meant that it has its proper beginning, middle, and end. The quantitative parts are the Prologue, Episode, Exode, and Choric song.

Act One of *A View from the Bridge* opens with a Prologue. This is a proper beginning, according to the aforementioned definition. The Prologue in *A View from the Bridge* is composed of a description of the stage set and what the characters on the stage are doing. This merges into an introduction by the first talking character, Alfieri, the narrator of the play.

The street and house of a tenement building. The front is skeletal entirely. The main acting area is the living room-dining room of Eddie's apartment. [...] As the curtain raises, Louis and Mike, longshoremen, are pitching coins against the building at left.  
A distant foghorn blows.  
Enter Alfieri, a lawyer in his fifties turning gray; [...] He crosses the stage to his desk, removes his hat, runs his fingers through his hair, and grinning, speaks to the audience. (Miller 1960, 3-4).

A Parode follows "You wouldn't have known it, but something amusing has just happened" (Miller 1960, 4). The Parode is "the first undivided utterance of the Chorus" (Butcher 8). The Chorus in *A View from the Bridge* is replaced by one man, the wise, omniscient lawyer Alfieri. It is not uncommon for tragedy to feature the Chorus as the

first person/ people to speak. Usually in Greek tragedies there is a part which precedes the Parade of the Chorus. In *Agamemnon*, first a Watchman comes forward to announce the news about the fall of Troy to Queen Clytemnestra and when he leaves; the Chorus enters and reveals the historical background and events preceding the present. Miller chose a different strategy though. It may be due to the fact that Alfieri appears in the present and the actions of the play are told in retrospect from Alfieri's memories, similarly as in Miller's contemporary Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. I will come back to the Chorus in *A View from the Bridge* in another chapter and analyze it in detail.

The Prologue is followed by Alfieri's portrayal of the community within which the action takes place. The setting of the play is Red Hook, "the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge" (Miller 1960, 4). He continues by revealing the tragic ending of his story while Eddie appears on the stage. Alfieri introduces him and disappears. The fact that the reader or spectator learns the end of the play within only one minute is exceptional and very important for the play.

One could consider this strategy a spoiler of the play but it is one of the most important characteristics of tragedy. Usually, in the ancient times, the subjects of tragedies were legends. Considering this, the audience watching the ancient tragedies in the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens came not because they wanted to know what was going to happen but how it was going to happen (Barnet 437). Miller considers this a "much stronger way of telling a tale" (BBC 5, 3:22). It was common knowledge to the Athenians that Oedipus was the son of Jocasta, and they knew as well that he killed his father, King Laius. Moreover, everybody was familiar with the fact that at the end of the story the tragic hero blinds himself and flees to the mountains. Likewise, the Shakespearean theatergoers knew the endings of the plays before they saw them performed, as the playwright exploited legends for his plays.

The great tragedians competed the depiction of their stories. The beauty of tragedy lies in the great emotional force upon the audience. To attain this striking mission the tragedians employed certain practices or rules which Aristotle gave structure to in *Poetics*. Miller, on the other hand, could not trust the general knowledge of his audience. The true story he had used for the play was a legend, however in the Red

Hook area only. Therefore, he had Alfieri reveal how the story was going to end, and focused on the way of how it ran its course.

This classic tragic layout is rather different from a modern one. Theatergoers today expect the development of the plot to be suspenseful and surprising, as in the “well-made” plays which have been performed since Ibsen. If it was not for the suspense and surprise well-made plays would be similar to Aristotle’s tragedy. Both have well-crafted plots with rules and formulas (<http://henriksenenglish.wikispaces.com>). Nevertheless, the element of suspense is not present in the Greek tragedies, much like in *A View from the Bridge*. From the beginning of Miller’s tragedy it is obvious to the audience what is going to happen to Eddie.

In Greek tragedies, the episodes are marked by Choric songs. The part between the songs is an Episode. The Episodes are substituted for by acts and scenes in Miller’s play; the scenes are not marked though as for instance in Shakespeare’s plays. Alfieri’s monologues definitely serve as kinds of Chorus songs because they, in most cases, separate the scenes. *A View from the Bridge* is written in two acts. The first act revolves around the actions which precede the climax of the play. Act Two shows what happens from the climax to the end. At first Miller did not intend for the play to be in two acts. He wrote two versions of *A View from the Bridge*.

I wanted to see whether I could write a play with one single act [...] I wanted to have one long line with one explosion, which is rather a Greek way. We’ve all forgotten that the Greek plays are one act plays” (BBC interview, 1987).

The first version of *A View* was a one act play. Later, Miller revised the play and added the viewpoint of Beatrice, Eddie Carbone’s wife toward his “gathering tragedy” (Miller 1987, 419). It is the second version that is studied and performed today (Milligan 10). The Exode is the part of tragedy which no Choric song follows. As noted before, there are no choric songs in the play so one can only assume what the playwright meant to be the Exode of the play. The end of *A View from the Bridge* is devoted to Alfieri, the moral voice of the play.

Most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better. But the truth is holy, [...] And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so I mourn him – I admit it – with a certain ... alarm (Miller 1960, 86).

The commentary above is a typical example of an ending of tragedy. In *Oedipus the King*, for instance, the Chorus summarizes the tragedy by saying “[...] and speak of no man’s happiness till, without sorrow, he hath passed the goal of life” (Barnet 93). Revealing the moral purpose is a quality that can often be found in Greek tragedies.

The plot of *A View from the Bridge* imitates one action which includes the events of one man which are important and could not be displaced or removed. Otherwise the whole would be disturbed. The playwright focused on the actions of Eddie’s character and involved the events that lead from his happiness at the beginning to despair at the end. This is what makes the plot united.

So far the arrangements of the incidents have been structured. An analysis of the emotional interest of tragedy or the parts of the plot that evoke pity and fear follows in the next chapter.

## **6.2. The Tragic Pattern**

Aristotle distinguishes two types of a plot; the simple and complex. The plot of *A View from the Bridge* is complex because it contains Peripeteia or a Reversal of the situation. This tragic device veers the action to its opposite. It is important though that the sequence of events must happen according to the law of probability or necessity. The rule of probability or necessity applies to the whole plot and means that the characters act according to what is possible or appropriate in given circumstances (Butcher 7). In other words, Peripeteia occurs when the hero thinks that everything will turn out well for him but will suffer a reversal which usually leads to his death.

To illustrate, Oedipus rejoices when the messenger comes bearing the news about the death of his father by natural causes because it means that the prophecy has been disproved. Unfortunately, the messenger also reveals the truth that Polybus and Merope were not his biological parents and that he came to Corinth as an orphan. Furthermore, he learns that the shepherd who brought him there was ordered by Jocasta, his current wife, as the baby had been prophesied that he would kill his parents. Realizing that Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus, finding her dead, blinds himself and flees Thebes.

A more modern example of Peripeteia can be found in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*. In this tragic play, Abbie, with the false belief that her deed would revive the relationship with her lover Eben, commits infanticide. The effect of her action upon Eben, eventuates differently than she hoped. At first infuriated over Abbie's killing their baby, Eben initially wants her to pay for her sin, but then realizes that the blame should be on him as well, so he decides to share the punishment with her.

The main motive of the protagonist of *A View from the Bridge* is passion. This is what makes the play the Pathetic kind of tragedy (Butcher 28). The hero of *A View from the Bridge*, Eddie Carbone, is driven by jealousy and the inappropriate passion for his niece, Catherine, to desperate actions. He calls the immigration bureau hoping that this would prevent her from marrying Rodolpho, the cousin of his wife Beatrice who, together with his brother Marco, had been living in the Carbone's apartment. Not listening to Alfieri's warning, Eddie expects to free Catherine from Rodolpho and hopes that things will return to how they used to be. Unfortunately for Eddie, this causes the opposite effect. When he arrives home, feeling satisfied with his vicious deed, he learns that Marco and Rodolpho moved in the neighbor's apartment together with other two more illegal immigrants. The other two men come from an influential family and Eddie panics, so he warns Catherine but it is already too late. As the brothers are being led away by the immigration officers Marco accuses Eddie of killing his children (they are starving back in Italy and Marco is their only provider) in front of the whole street. The neighbors turn away from Eddie after he is denounced for his treachery. Beatrice understands earlier than Eddie that such betrayal is unforgivable, as well as the fact that Marco would come back to seek revenge. She tries to persuade Eddie to leave.

Eddie. Let's go someplace. Come. You and me. I don't want you to be here when he comes. I'll get your coat (Miller 1960, 82).

Living in the illusion that Marco will apologize for insulting him, Eddie refuses to leave his house and waits for Marco. When Eddie hears Marco calling his name outside he comes out demanding a public apology. When the grapple starts Eddie produces a knife, which Marco forces away against him killing him. This is how the author describe the action:

*Eddie lunges with the knife. Marco grabs his arm, turning the blade inward and pressing it home as the women and Louis and Mike rush in and separate them, and Eddie, the knife still in his hand, falls to his knees before Marco. The two women support him for a moment, calling his name again and again (Miller 1960, 85).*

What followed Eddie's desperate act of treachery was the probable result of it. The event is a case of post hoc and propter hoc (Butcher 20). This means that Eddie was killed as a result of his betrayal and because of his betrayal. Also it was due to the rule of probability. If this was an ancient tragedy Marco would be led by prophets, oracles or gods like Orestes to vengeance but this is 1950s America. Marco's belief that it was right to kill Eddie rested on the traditions of the Sicilian vendetta (Milligan 58). Eddie has "killed" Marco's family by taking the opportunity to make a living from him. He broke the code, which demands that families should support one another. One can speak about the law of probability here because not only Marco, but men belonging to the same community, coming from the same background as Marco, would probably do the same. Thus the action is not arbitrary, but more sensational than by chance (Butcher 16).

Accordingly, the kind of misfortune that is brought upon Eddie is not just a result of an unlucky incident that happened because of fate or unhappy circumstances. Eddie (even though he acts like he does not) knows what kind of consequences would follow his deed if the people around him find out what he did. Yet, blinded by jealousy, anger and passion he disregards this. His main concern is keeping Catherine to himself. Hegel considers the deepest kinds of tragedies those in which the hero is self-destructive (celt.uwindsor.ca).

Even before Eddie tells him Alfieri knows both what Eddie is about to do as well as the consequences that will follow. Alfieri is a lawyer, which is another reason he knows how people behave and act very well. The law of probability is applicable to Eddie's actions as well. When Eddie goes to Alfieri's office to seek legal advice, his main argument is that "the guy ain't right" (Miller 1960, 65). Alfieri senses what is in Eddie's thoughts and warns him

You won't have a friend in the world Eddie! Even those who understand will turn against you, even those who feel the same will despise you! Put it out of your mind! (Miller 1960, 66)

The whole concept of such a betrayal was “horrificing” for the little society of Italian immigrants. Through his actions, according to Arthur Miller, Eddie reveals that it is not the community but his “own instinctive need that was the most important thing to him” (BBC 4, 1:39). Moreover it was his own family he betrayed. By accepting Marco and Rodolpho in his house, he made a kind of promise to take care of them which he broke. By the end of the play his neighbors, his family (except for Beatrice) and his friends turn their backs on him because they no longer see him as a part of their community. So, even if he had not been killed he would be metaphorically dead for everybody and he must have known this when he made the fatal phone call.

This rule of necessity or probability of the actions in tragedy is divided into types in Frye’s “Theory of Archetypes.” The moment when Eddie calls the immigration is called a “counterbalancing movement,” and it comes as a result of the “initial act,” which is an act provoking revenge and represents an inseparable part of tragedy. To illustrate, in *Agamemnon*, the King, sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to the god Artemis, which incenses his wife and mother of the child, Clytemnestra. Although the act itself is performed by a human being, it is triggered by a deity or another world. The initial act is done by free will in *A View from the Bridge*. When Eddie finds out that Catherine and Rodolpho share affection and that Rodolpho has asked for her hand in marriage, Eddie keeps trying to fight his lust and jealousy but fails. Subsequently, his desperate action leads to “resolution,” the final part of tragedy which, in this case, ends in Eddie’s destruction (<http://edweb.tusd.k12.az.us>).

The last part of the emotional interest of the tragic plot is pathos, or the so called scene of suffering. The pathos in *A View from the Bridge* happens on the stage and is visible to the spectators. In Greek Tragedies it was usually done this way, or it happened off stage and the audience only heard what was happening as in *Agamemnon*, where the death of the King is prophesied first and then he cries out in pain from inside of the castle. Another way was to have the Chorus describe it as in *Electra* where Clytemnestra is killed by her son Orestes by pushing a sword down her throat. The scene of suffering usually but not always involves death. (Butcher 18)

The second element of the emotional interest in tragedy is Anagnorisis or Recognition scene (Butcher 12). For illustration, Anagnorisis occurs when Oedipus kills his father,

the King, in ignorance and learns that he was his true father later. This is also the best kind of recognition according to Aristotle, because the truth is discovered after the irreparable deed is done. Usually, Recognition takes place between two persons. However, it may happen that only one person is recognized by another. There is no significant moment of discovery in *A View from the Bridge* that would cause the reversal of situation, as these two elements (Anagnorisis and Peripeteia) come in combination, being the instruments that produce pity or fear (ibid 18).

Minor discoveries happen in *A View from the Bridge* though. Firstly, when Eddie discovers that Beatrice has known about his feelings for Catherine for some time, he is horrified because he had never expected her to operate on this level. Moreover, he never admitted to himself that his feelings for Catherine are sexual. Secondly, and this is probably the most important since it triggers the series of incidents leading to Eddie's death, when Eddie realizes that the wedding is going to take place even after his forbiddance. When Catherine confirms that she getting married against her uncle's will, Eddie gets drunk and behaves brutally. His kissing of her and her fiancé clearly terrifies her, but he thinks he has asserted his authority over her.

CATHERINE: Eddie! Let go, ya hear me! I'll kill you! Leggo of him!  
EDDIE, to Catherine: You see? To Rodolpho: I give you till tomorrow, kid. Get outa here. Alone. You hear me? Alone.  
CATHERINE: I'm going with him, Eddie (Miller 1960, 62).

It is obvious from the dialogue above that the only effect his aggressively had upon his niece is repulsion. This is the last moment they are all together because what follows is his telephone call to the authorities.

The combination of Recognition scene and Reversal of situation produces either pity or fear, effects that are required for every tragedy (Butcher 18). The above mentioned scenes will be evaluated separately with respect to these emotions in the following chapter.

### **6.3. Emotional Interest**

To evoke pitiful feelings the misfortune of the character must be unmerited. On top of that, the change of fortune must be from good to bad and should come as a result of some great error or frailty. Unlike pity, though, fear influences people by means of the

central character (Butcher 20). A well developed character is both, an “undeserved victim” and the “responsible source of his own ruin” (Sachs 7). Therefore, what terrifies the audience is the awareness of the possibility that they could be suddenly involved in the same situation. The purgation of the emotions, such as pity and fear is in Greek language found under the name Catharsis (ibid 11).

It is difficult to feel sympathy for Eddie. He behaves selfishly and petulantly in Act Two, the climax of the play. Conversely, the audience is more probable to feel compassion for Rodolpho, who offers a more moral character than Eddie. The audience or the reader has a chance to observe him as he shifts from a stable, authoritative man to a desperate human being stuck in attempts to preserve his name. So, even though we do not feel much sympathy for Eddie at the moment he calls immigration, the feelings of pity arise when we see him as a man struggling for a place in society. While Eddie thinks of himself as the same strong and respectful man as he was before, we see a human being reaching for his inevitable fate. Whereas Eddie should regret the betrayal of his family, the only thing he regrets is that it came to the surface, and he wants to reverse that. Unfortunately for Eddie, he will never again be an insider in the society he betrayed, and would not be even if he lived.

Eddie had been warned by Alfieri, and again by Beatrice, but still was not able to resist the urge to stop his beloved niece from flying from his nest. The strong and respectful man he was before the cousins’ arrival is gone. Now we see a man who disgusts his own family and friends. Eddie tries, though, even after being accused and spitted in the face in public, he fights back. Unfortunately, the deed cannot be undone. Even Catherine is repulsed by him as he compares him to a rat.

CATHERINE: [...] He belongs in the sewer [...] He bites people when they sleep! He comes when nobody’s lookin’ and poisons decent people. In the garbage he belongs!

BEATRICE: [...] Then we all belong in the garbage. You, and me too. Don’t say that. Whatever happened we all done it, and don’t you ever forget it, Catherine (Miller 1960, 81-82)

While Catherine is ready to forget her future with Eddie in her life, Beatrice is willing to take the blame for what he did and tries to save him by trying to convince him to run away with her.

BEATRICE, *quietly*: Eddie. Let's go someplace. Come. You and me. *He has not moved*. I don't want you to be here when he comes. I'll get your coat.

EDDIE: Where? Where am I goin'? This is my house (Miller 1960, 82).

The sight of her desperate attempts to persuade Eddie to leave Red Hook is pitiful, since not only did he bury his own reputation, but also his family's. Beatrice's unconditional love and loyalty for Eddie is proved again when she refuses to attend Catherine's wedding for Eddie's sake "Now go, go to your wedding, Katie, I'll stay home. Go. God bless you, God bless your children" (Miller 1960, 82).

The emotion of pity turns from Beatrice and her desperate attempts to save their family, to Eddie and his own accumulating sorrow. He must realize at this moment that he has ruined his and Beatrice's life. Blaming Marco for his despair, Eddie awaits an apology which clearly is not going to come.

BEATRICE: What do you want! Eddie, what do you want!

EDDIE: I want my name! [...] Marco's got my name-*to Rodolpho*: and you can run tell him, kid, that he's gonna give it back to me in front of this neighborhood, or we have it out. Come on, where is he? Take me to him.

[...]

BEATRICE: You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her!

CATHERINE, *in horror*: B.!

EDDIE, *shocked, horrified, his fists clenching*: Beatrice!

*Marco appears outside, walking toward the door from a distant point.*

BEATRICE, *crying out, weeping*: The truth is not as bad as blood, Eddie! I'm tellin' you the truth-tell her good-by forever!

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* (Miller 1960, 84).

Eddie reacts angrily to Beatrice's warning about his feelings for Catherine. The role of his wife has been that of a silent spectator of the events until now, when she tries to save her husband's life.

Marco comes seeking revenge right after this conversation. The oldest of the brothers is no longer grateful to Eddie. Moreover, Marco's chances for future in America are gone, so the only thing that matters anymore is to avenge himself and his family, who Eddie

has sent back to starvation and misery. Having nothing to lose, it is clear that Marco will seek Eddie's life. Nevertheless, Eddie still lives in the delusion that Marco disobeyed him after Eddie had been nothing but hospitable to him, and that he is coming to apologize.

EDDIE: *He gradually comes to address the people:* Maybe he come to apologize to me. Heh, Marco? For what you said about me in front of the neighborhood? *He is incensing himself and little bits of laughter even escape him as his eyes are murderous and he cracks his knuckles in his hands with a strange sort of relaxation.* He knows that ain't right. To do like that? To a man? Which I put my roof over their head and my food in their mouth? Like in the Bible? Strangers I never seen in my whole life? To come out of the water and grab a girl for a passport? To go and take from your own family like from the stable—and never a word to me? And now accusations in the bargain! *Directly to Marco:* Wipin' the neighborhood with my name like a dirty rag! I want my name, Marco. *He is moving now, carefully, toward Marco.* Now gimme my name and we go together to the wedding (Miller 1960, 84).

Unfortunately for Eddie, Marco cannot give him the submission Eddie demands. When Eddie threatens Marco, he has no other choice than to defend himself. Still, as Eddie is dying in Beatrice's arms he does not seem to feel any understanding of the actions that have led him to this ending. It is this moment of recognition for Eddie and the audience that creates the atmosphere of pity and fear, which according to Aristotle is the best method, as the "tragic wonder" is greater than if it happens by accident (Butcher 16). It is clear from the above that Miller counted on the dramatic tension on the stage which is, however less artistic than if it came from the inner structure of the plot. Fear and pity in *A View from the Bridge* are aroused by spectacular means (ibid 22).

Not only Aristotle, but Hegel also finds showing kind of misfortune on stage unsatisfactory in comparison with the ancient Greek tragedies. Aristotle claims that the action that evokes pity must occur between persons who are near or dear to one another. Nonetheless, Eddie and Marco became enemies when Eddie ruined Marco's chances for good life and future in the United States. When Marco kills Eddie it is not likely that the audience will pity him because it was not due to some kind of ignorance, as when Oedipus kills his father and then learns his true relationship to him. Conversely, Marco kills Eddie because, in his opinion, he deserves to be dead after what he did. The only thing that is pitiful then is the suffering of the hero itself, not the

actions that preceded his death, as it should be in tragedy according to Aristotle (Butcher 22).

In addition, Hegel argues that in many modern tragedies the misfortune is caused by “unhappy circumstances and outward incidents.” This external necessity cannot be compared to the role of fate in Greek tragedies, so the modern tragedies in this sense are never really deep. However, when the accident is depicted, as in *A View from the Bridge*, that the hero is destroyed not simply by an outward force but that the audience feels to coincide with something in the hero himself, the impression of external necessity can be avoided (Bradley 7). The audience feels compassion for Eddie because, by the end of the play, he appears as a lost, broken man. Even though, he believes there is still a chance for him, the audience knows that he has lost every privilege to be a respected neighbor, co-worker, or husband and uncle. Eddie is pitied because he never meant to hurt anybody but the more he hurt himself the more he let his feelings overwhelm him and hurt others. His death is inevitable. The feeling of pity would be left unaccompanied by fear if he did not really die but was left to live his life in misery. Eddie is both innocent and guilty since he stands in a conflict of two “substantive positions” (celt.uwindsor.ca). One of them is the love he carries for his niece, the second is the law. Hegel generalizes the tragic conflict to make it applicable to every tragedy. The conflict happens between the family and state (Bradley 4). The proper example here is the conflict in *Antigone*, since this tragedy is Hegel’s favorite. She faces the life and death question – to bury her brothers over the ban of the King or not. Without hesitation she chooses her family over the state. The ruler, Creon, despite the love of his son for Antigone, requires punishing her as if it were anyone else. Creon’s pride disallows him from choosing differently and he yields precedence to the state over his family. As a result, Antigone anticipates her death in the chamber where she was put to starve, and her fiancé, Creon’s son, kills himself when finds her. It is obvious from this example that there is no right choice. The catastrophe in tragedies occurs either way, as “observance of one should involve the violation of another” (Bradley 4).

When Eddie chooses his niece over the community and the law of vendetta he violates the “ethical substance,” and his actions turn against him. Hegel perceives the feeling of

pity for the hero as a kind of sympathy because he violated the ethical substance as a result of collision and therefore his suffering is in a sense justified. Eddie refuses to acknowledge the validity of the other position not only before but after he has done the tragic deed. It is the audience, not the hero himself, who knows that it will cause not only destructive, but self-destructive consequences upon him. Moreover, the positions he chooses from are equal, as he is the member of both his family, and the community, and by betraying the latter he returns his own verdict (celt.uwindsor.ca).

Eddie's resistance in denial is due to the fact that he still attempts to gain his "rightful" position in the community. He still demands to be evaluated justly, he fears being displaced. He still has a picture of what is right in his head but no one else sees it. This is what we pity in him that he can be so desperate to believe there is still a chance for him even after all the harm he did. This man's "total compulsion to evaluate himself justly" leads to his destruction and that is precisely what Miller calls "morality of tragedy, and its lesson." What makes Eddie pathetic is that he fights a battle he could not possibly win, and everybody knows this at the time, even the reader or the audience (www.nytimes.com).

Friedrich Nietzsche sees the struggle of the main hero between the Apollonian and Dionysian. The first element, or drive, represents the order, while the second the chaos (Nietzsche 45). Eddie's struggle is an attempt to set things right again that got out of his control. Unfortunately, this hassle remains unfulfilled since Eddie dies while trying to accomplish it. The Apollonian is represented in Alfieri, the lawyer and the narrator of the play. He is the moral pole, the voice of reason and justice in the community. The Dionysian finds itself in Eddie who represents the spontaneity, irrationality, and trouble. He disobeys the rules in their society which leads him towards the inevitable fate.

#### **6.4. The Tragic Hero**

Tragedy represents men of a higher type in action. When creating a tragic hero, the poet should observe four rules, as defined by Aristotle. First of all the character must be

“good” which is only possible if his purpose is good, as goodness and badness are the “distinguishing marks of moral differences” (Butcher 10).

Even though Eddie Carbone is not a noble man, he definitely meets this first criterion. He is the breadwinner in his family and cares deeply about them. Eddie is a larger-than-life figure: kind-hearted, willful, warm, honorable and well respected in the dock, his work place, and Red Hook, the area where he lives.

ALFIERI: He was as good a man as he had to be in a life that was hard and even. He worked on the piers when there was work, he brought home his pay, and he lived (Miller 1960, 20).

He is overprotective of Catherine, which becomes visible at the beginning of Act One where she brags about a job that was offered to her in the city. While Catherine is excited to have a life of her own, Eddie is worried about her. She has always respected Eddie as her own father; however the reader can sense a close rapport between them, stronger than the one between a father and daughter. Secondly, Eddie’s character conforms to reality which makes his character “true to life.” He is a dock worker, earning minimal wage, behaving the way most dock workers do. Thirdly, Eddie fulfills the rule of propriety that makes the center character heroic. Italian men in general are very “macho” and Eddie, having roots in Italy is also proud, temperamental, possessive, boisterous, etc. Eddie is satisfied with his life and conservative in a way since he does not welcome any changes, such as Catherine standing on her own feet. The last condition is consistency. This means that the behavior of the character throughout the play should not undertake any significant changes. It is true that Eddie’s character undergoes degradation. He is unruffled at the beginning and kind of delirious at the end of the play. However, the changes that affect his nature are consistent. Aristotle adds that if there is inconsistency in a character, it still must be consistently inconsistent (Butcher 24). The changes in his character are a result of his obsession over his niece. This obsession gradually grows and consumes the good inside him, i.e. how he treats his wife Beatrice or her cousins.

Even though Eddie acts selfishly and is rude and disrespectful to Marco, the reader feels sorry for him. One reason might be that his misfortune was unmerited. On one hand, he was a man with inappropriate, incestuous feelings but on the other hand the feeling was

love that drove him to an early, tragic death. This might be considered romantic by some. Moreover, Catherine is his wife's niece so they are not related by blood.

After all, Oedipus lived in ignorance married to his own mother. The Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud claimed that the "Oedipus Complex" is a universal condition. The term derived from *Oedipus Tyrannus* and expresses every boy or man's desires to kill his father and sleep with his mother. Nevertheless his feelings are repressed because "he fears punishment or displeasure of the parent of the same sex" (www.uvm.edu). This Freudian analysis was not how the idea of incest in *A View from the Bridge* originated though. Firstly, Miller gives credit to his friend who confessed sexual dreams about his cousin. Secondly, there was a time when Miller was dissatisfied with his sexual life and brooded over his own family's emotional complexity

I knew that somewhere behind my sexual anxieties lay incestuous stains that spread toward sister and mother. Playfully in my mind would set up chessboard arrangements, the pieces being father, mother, brother, sister, each with different powers and rights-of-way, imperious in one direction while vulnerable and paralyzed in another. Regardless of how the game played out, it had to end the same way, in a confrontation with the father after I had picked off sister and mother and pushed brother beyond reach of effective action. The father could move in all directions, and his decree of punishment, of course, was always death (Miller 1987, 145).

The incestuous feelings that Eddie carries for his niece, Catherine, play the crucial role in his character, as they represent what Aristotle calls Hamartia. The Greek word Hamartia, found many translations in English. Sometimes it is found under the English phrase "tragic or fatal flaw" (Barry), another interpretation is an "error or frailty" (Butcher). Regardless of its proper translation, Hamartia is an inseparable element in tragedies as it represents the reason of the downfall of the hero (Sachs 8).

Miller does not perceive the 'tragic flaw' as a weakness necessarily, but as an "inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status" (www.nytimes.com). The hero of *A View from the Bridge* is not able to find peace until he gets what he wants. What he wants, however, does not belong to him and, moreover, he crosses the imaginary border when trying to reach it. He is unable to accept his guilt and the continual denial becomes fatal. Miller sees this as an American tendency in general. He proposes that this "tendency

toward denial” is self-destructive and suggest that people should accept their guilt and move on with their lives (Abbotson 49). This is what he probably meant by the moral message, or advice, declared by the narrator, Alfieri, that it is better to “settle for half” (Miller 1960, 86).

Eddie’s incestuous feelings for Catherine contribute to another theme of *A View from the Bridge*, the sexual theme. In general, sexual themes, such as incest or homosexuality, were taboo in America in the times the play was written. Homosexuality appears in *A View* when Eddie kisses Rodolpho, or when he keeps saying “the boy ain’t right” (Miller 1960, 43). This is just another of Eddie’s excuses why Rodolpho is not an appropriate spouse for Catherine. Eddie complains that Rodolpho does not behave as other longshoremen, he sings, makes dresses, or cooks. By all this, Eddie is trying to suggest that Rodolpho might be gay.

Homosexuality does not directly appear in *A View from the Bridge*, except when Eddie kisses Rodolpho to prove that Catherine’s fiancé is gay. Despite this, for a time the play could not be produced in a British theatre because homosexuality “could not be referred to directly on the stage” (Miller 1987, 429). Miller claims that his contemporary Tennessee Williams was not appreciated enough due to the fact that majority culture was aroused against him because he was a homosexual (ibid 180). In this period homosexuality was treated as a moral flaw or sin. While the changes in favor for homosexuals in 1950s’ were slowly beginning, incest is illegal in every state in North America ([www.palmcenter.org](http://www.palmcenter.org)).

It has already been established that the central character of tragedy should be an ennobled version of a ‘normal’ human being. It should present an image of a virtuous man that the reader or audience find themselves within. Eddie, being that type of character that is in a sense someone like us, experiences a striking downfall in *A View from the Bridge*. However, it is not due to some form of badness of character, warns Aristotle, but due to some lapse. It is the hero’s aiming at something exceedingly high that contributes to his suffering (Sachs 8).

Certainly, Eddie does not fit into the line of tragic heroes of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, etc. He is a modern tragic hero. Steiner argues that tragic hero is defined

by a hierarchical order. Heroic are those who “occupy the summit of the order, it reveals the significance of their fall from such height and it insures that this fall will have a public significance” (Gillespie 154). While for Steiner Eddie would represent a non-tragic hero because the lack of his status, Miller sees modern heroes differently.

Miller’s opinion is different. He argues that the only fear Steiner’s hero would produce would be the “fear of being displaced.” Moreover, Miller says that the fear is strong amongst us and “it is the common man who knows his best” (www.nytimes.com).

It is necessary to point out that Eddie, as opposed to the traditional tragic hero, is a realistic hero. His face is not hidden behind a mask, as it was in the ancient times. Eddie is a type of hero in whom everybody can find himself. Northrop Frye, a more recent literary theorist, ascribes authenticity and naturalness to tragic characters, which is also a realistic quality (Frye 240).

The author of the play asserts that people should be moved with pity for Eddie because they can identify with him, “a man who does so many unworthy things.” (Miller 1987, 412) At any rate, Eddie has failed to know himself. He has failed as a member of his society or community, as a friend, neighbor, husband, guardian, and as a human being. But most importantly, he has failed himself and as a result he loses his identity. Human compassion allows the spectators of his failure feel pity for him; after all, he would not be a human if he did not make mistakes.

## **6.5. The Position of the Narrator**

The function of the lawyer-narrator in *A View from the Bridge* is commonly conflated with that of a Chorus. In Greek tragedies, the function of the Chorus is to state the situation that the audience is to be exposed to at the opening of the play. The Chorus is an anonymous person, or a group of people, who comment on the action throughout the play. Sometimes the Chorus sings (Choric songs). Usually, the Chorus takes part in the action, as in *Agamemnon*. In this tragedy, the Chorus embodies a group of elder citizens of Argos but they function as a whole. Not only do they comment on the action, but they can also debate, advise, ask for clarification of the character’s actions, etc. Moreover, the Chorus in *Agamemnon* takes part in the schemes of Orestes and Electra against their mother Clytemnestra (www.kyrilevin.wordpress.com) Even though the

Chorus usually offers an objective view upon the action, sometimes it can supply the audience with its own, biased, opinions.

Alfieri's function in *A View from the Bridge* is not of a Chorus but a narrator of the play. Surely he also functions as an observer, commentator, takes action in the play, etc. Nevertheless, Alfieri comments on the action from a retrospect and the story takes place in his memories. This is probably the strongest argument why Alfieri's character is different from the Chorus, as otherwise their functions in the play are similar.

Regarding his insight into the characters, Alfieri is an omniscient narrator. Moreover he sets up the moral situation in the play. Considering that Alfieri is a lawyer, he is able to give an impersonal and unemotional views represented in the law. His comments are for the most part objective. Eddie comes to Alfieri's office twice in the play. In their dialogues, Eddie's speech is emotional but Alfieri's merely opposite. The lawyer provides Eddie with legal advice and lectures him morally, but he does not take any action, as he remembers "I kept wanting to call the police, but nothing had happened" (Miller 1960, 64). There are no signs of regret in his words.

Alfieri's role as an observer is explained by Arthur Miller himself. "He is the view from the bridge." Seemingly, Alfieri's position is on the Brooklyn Bridge (BBC 1, 2:33). The narrator represents the connection between the American and the Italian society, and he stands somewhere in between. Alfieri is the civilized version of the people under the bridge but still connected to them by his origins. Moreover, the narrator's view may be similar to Miller's own. It is highly probable that Miller felt similarly when he lived close to the waterfront and worked with the Italians in the dock. He represented the connection between their 'world' and the one that is up, or on the other side of the bridge. His life then was divided into two different worlds, the waterfront and his writing career.

The narrator of the play does not represent the connection between two cultures only. He is also a dramatic device that serves to connect the audience and the actions on the stage. However this is not a typical strategy for tragedy, according to Aristotle. To this Greek philosopher, the narrative form is typical for poetic imitation (i.e. Epic poetry), not dramatic (Butcher 39).

*A View from the Bridge* is not the last play in which Miller exploited a narrator. His later play, *The American Clock*, is unified by two narrators. One of them represents the naive and the other the wise voice of the unfolding events. Furthermore, Miller experimented with its form when he let the characters of the play directly address the audience (Abbotson 101). With respect to realistic tendencies, this is not a typical strategy. On one hand, this framing device brings the spectators into the play by referring to them, but on the other hand it may cause their alienation.

In the same time when realism flourished in America, another theatrical movement was arising in Europe. Bertolt Brecht, the “propounder” and one of its practitioners of Epic theatre perceived realism as “disconcerting” with its efforts to preserve real characters and actions. Hence he created an atmosphere on stage that consumed the audience at first and then demanded the reexamination of what they had “previously perceived as reality” (Abbotson 117). The distancing element in *A View* is the narrator who comments on the actions with voice of reason and morality. Thus the audience breaks away from the actions on the stage and speculates about Alfieri’s lessons.

Nevertheless, Miller’s plays are generally perceived as realistic. Although this is true, he often experimented with other forms and techniques. Apart from the use of narrator, *A View from a Bridge* is an experiment with regard to its form of tragedy, especially considering the first version of the play written in one act and verse. Aside from its form, the chronological order, typical for realistic plays, is violated. He uses flashbacks and mingles the present with the past while one of the characters, Alfieri, appears in both. These tendencies are typical for expressionists. Miller explored expressionistic devices further in *Death of a Salesman*, in which the illusions of the main protagonist Willy Loman let the audience see a younger version of him. Miller admits in the Paris Interview that he was moved by German expressionism and learnt a lot from it (<http://www.theparisreview.org>).

Miller was not the only playwright who employed narrators in his plays. Tennessee Williams, his contemporary, and a writer with “the same approach,” also chose to engage a narrator in his memory play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) (Miller 1987, 180). Tom Wingfield, also unfolds a story through the lens of his memory. Unlike Alfieri though, Tom is also the main protagonist of the play (Abbotson 85).

The position of the narrator in *a View from the Bridge* is diverse. For Miller himself, the moral standpoint is the most important. Alfieri is the voice of sanity and reason, constantly reminding the audience that Eddie's actions and motives for these actions are not right. This narrative device in the play aims for the consciousness of the audience.

## **6.6. The Tragic Themes**

Tragedy usually focuses on figures who belong to a group (or more groups) which form their key identity. The group can be represented by a family, a dynasty, an age group, a social class or people of the same religion. Moreover, the hero is put to a difficult decision of whether to stay loyal or betray the community. This choice usually results in severe or fatal consequences for the hero. In the following paragraphs the themes of community, loyalty and betrayal will be outlined and their importance will be illustrated by classical and contemporary examples. Moreover, Miller's commentaries on employing these themes will be mentioned, as well as the allegory in *A View from the Bridge*.

### **6.6.1. Community**

Eddie, the main hero of *A View from the Bridge*, is a member of more than one community, i.e. his family, neighborhood (Red Hook, New York), the immigrant community, or the Italian immigrant community to be more specific, the pier workers, etc.

The Red Hook area is a place that stands right under the Brooklyn Bridge and it is the exact area where the story of *A View from the Bridge* is enacted. This setting has important meanings for the author of the play. It is the area he spent almost two years working and growing close to the Italian workers, which is the reason why the play appeared in the first place (Miller 1987, 201). He describes this place as

[...] the other world that existed at the foot of peaceful, old-fashioned Brooklyn Hights, the sinister waterfront world of gangster-ridden unions assassinations, beatings, bodies thrown into the lovely bay at night (Miller 1987, 146).

It is clear from the above that the rules of American society did not control this area. It was like an "isolated village ruled by a feudal lord" (Miller 1987, 149). Besides Miller's

commentaries on this area, Alfieri gives a description of Red Hook at the beginning of the play. The reader of *A View from the Bridge* learns immediately from Alfieri's introduction of the community that, as in Sicily, mafia controlled the streets of Red Hook.

This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world. And now we are quite civilized, quite American. Now we settle for half, and I like it better. I no longer keep a pistol in my filing cabinet (Miller 1960, 4).

For Alfieri, this situation is bearable since he had experienced Italy in the days when

Al Capone, the greatest Carthaginian of all, was learning his trade on these pavements, and Frankie Yale himself was cut precisely in half by a machine gun on the corner of Union Street two blocks away. Oh, there were many here who were justly shot by unjust men. Justice is very important here (Miller 1960, 4).

The members of this Italian community are comfortable with the conditions of their life now, and respect the law of this neighborhood now because they have experienced much worse. The importance of the rule of law and the recognition of the authority and the criminal acts are significant in *A View from the Bridge*. Alfieri, and in all likelihood, the community as a whole, appreciates the suppression of "gangsterism" after the times of Al Capone's "lawlessness" (Milligan 33).

Another reason why Miller chose the Red Hook area for his tragedy is that he realized the importance of introducing the community he had experienced himself to the public. He explains in the interview from 1987.

[...] Brooklyn Bridge, it always struck me oddly, that there is this community traffic going over it night and day... people going out to nice neighborhoods, somewhere else... and they're passing over this area where this Greek drama was taking place and nobody even thought about it... nobody of course knew about it, but the whole area, the different culture that was down there was unknown to the people on the bridge... so it was a view from our culture, which is up on the bridge, down into their culture" (Video 1, 1:42).

Unfortunately for Italians, their country suffered during and after the First World War. America, on the other hand, flourished and symbolized new hope and light. The lucky Italians managed to find jobs and settle in America and the luckiest of them even received American citizenship. This was put to an end by the American government

after the First World War when the immigration policies of the United States excluded categories, as a result of which Italians were “less favored” than British citizens, for instance (Milligan 59). Consequently, immigrants who entered the country during WWI obtained American citizenship, but those who arrived after the war was over did not.

Miller reflects on these anomalies in *A View from the Bridge* and offers a peek into the struggle for existence of the illegal immigrants. Marco, the cousin who lives in Eddie’s home, came to the USA to earn money for his starving family as he explains when Catherine is curious about the reason he is not with his family.

What can I do? The older one is sick in his chest. My wife—she feeds them from her own mouth. I tell you the truth, if I stay there they will never grow up. They eat the sunshine (Miller 1960, 24).

What he means by “sick in his chest” is that his son is suffering from tuberculosis. His family probably did not have enough funds to pay for his shots. Marco, even though he misses his wife, is very happy that he made it to America, and often shows his gratefulness to Eddie and his family, since even though he never properly entered the country, at least he was in the USA. Illegal immigrants, such as Marco and Rodolpho, were protected by “an organization” in return for a piece of their salary (BBC 3, 0:59). The division of labor, in Miller’s opinion, was carried out under “medieval conditions.” He remembers that every morning the hiring boss chose some of the longshoremen, who after paying him off, were guaranteed a job for the day. The competition was severe and sometimes the workers ended up in bad fights (Miller 1987, 147).

Such minorities as this Italian one in Brooklyn, New York, exist almost everywhere in the world, i.e. Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic. Since the members of such communities feel estranged to the general public they try to stick together and the sense of solidarity is more important, especially to those who live in the country illegally.

The reader of *A View from the Bridge* is immediately exposed, not only to Alfieri’s description of what kind of a place Red Hook is, but also to the working class vernacular. One example is g-dropping as in Eddie’s speech “[...] I’m tellin’ you you’re walkin’ wavy” (Miller 1960, 6). People who drop their g are usually considered less educated and it is a characteristic feature of the working class. Another example is the

simplicity of their language. The one exception is Alfieri, whose speech is sophisticated and poetic, and it symbolizes the fact that he has distanced from the immigrants and he is no longer struggling for existence. However, he stays closely connected to the society by keeping his practice in the area and dealing with clients from the Italian community, such as Eddie's father, who he was acquainted with "in a casual way" (Miller 1960, 42).

Miller did not intend for the characters to speak with an Italian accent, and most performances of the play stay loyal to his wish. When experiencing *A View from the Bridge* as a theatrical performance, Eddie and his family all have American accents (Brooklyn slum slang supposedly). This is a clear illustration of how they have adopted the language of their host country. On one hand, their adoption to American life is apparent in the fact that they chose English language as their first. On the other hand, the Italian society still holds on to certain principles of their country of birth.

The community that creates the background of Miller's drama is a small world with its own rules, policy and habits. Moreover, the members fight their own fights inside this society apart from having to accept the second-class position in the new country. Through Miller's play we can witness the struggle of the Italian community in the part of the US, their strengths and weaknesses, even betrayal and crime.

### **6.6.2. Loyalty and Betrayal**

Generally, there is a strong emphasis on family ties in south European countries. Italians in particular hold together and are closer to their relatives than Americans. In the USA, families are usually divided into small independent units. Loyalty and respect are important qualities within not only families but also communities. The little Italian society in which Eddie and his family belong is dependent on devotion and confidentiality which is made necessary by their estrangement from the larger American society. By loyalty is meant a relationship among people of a certain group who are faithful and committed to one another ([www.dictionary.reference.com](http://www.dictionary.reference.com)). Loyalty is also a theme of many Greek tragedies. Oedipus's loyalty to Thebes or Romeo's relationship with Juliet, serve as examples.

Loyalty is central to *A View from the Bridge*. Except for the internal conflicts within Eddie's family, there is no evidence in the play that Eddie had ever been unfaithful,

maybe apart from his unacknowledged feelings for Catherine. However, there would not be any direct evidence that his interest was incestuous if it was not for him kissing her. The strong sense for family is also evident in Catherine's relationship with her guardians. Eddie's niece is not delighted by the idea of living apart from her aunt and uncle. All her life she has been devoted to Eddie and dependent upon his approval. There is a reason for that. Eddie has always put his niece first which is evident from his complaint before his breakdown

[...] 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 my own mouth to give to her. I took out my wife's mouth. I walked hungry plenty days in the city! (Miller 1960, 46)

As a consequence, Catherine feels grateful to Eddie and she feels as if she was betraying him by not obeying his restriction to date Rodolpho. Beatrice, on the other hand, is strict to Catherine in trying to communicate her that she must 'grow up', since Beatrice suspects Eddie's attitude towards Catherine has been gradually changing. The loyalty of Eddie's wife is confirmed by the end of the play when she offers to run away with him and hinders Eddie before Catherine's accusations.

Likewise, Marco is devoted to his own family. He often speaks about his wife with affection and he sends almost all wages he earns in the dock to her. He also feels responsible to protect his less mature brother Rodolpho and does not hesitate to defend him when necessary. Rodolpho treats Marco with respect and obeys him. For instance, when Rodolpho sings and Eddie warns him that somebody could hear him, Marco immediately quiets him. Moreover, Marco feels committed to Eddie for providing him and Rodolpho with a shelter.

In the times the play was written it was not uncommon that illegal immigrants found an asylum in their 'American' families' homes, for the reasons mentioned in the previous chapter. It was loyalty that kept the community together was loyalty. Before the cousins arrive, Eddie wants to make sure again that Beatrice and Catherine will not endanger themselves by talking about the cousins to wrong people (e.g. interposed immigration officers). He warns them "This is the United States government you're playin' with

now, this is the Immigration Bureau.” In addition to this, Eddie reminds the women about a boy named Vinny who “snitched on his own uncle” (Miller 1960, 17). Eddie shows disgust and is horrified over such betrayal and he gives Catherine a moral lecture.

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 stolen than a word that you gave away” (Miller 1960, 18).

From this it is clear that the consequences of disloyalty in this community are fatal for the traitor. Ironically, it is Eddie who ends up like this boy.

Obviously, it cannot be held as a secret that Rodolpho and Marco live in Eddie’s house for long. They work in the pier everyday and meet their neighbors. Fortunately they are protected, as the society is built on confidentiality and loyalty so everybody keeps the secret for themselves. Eddie explains that there are “pigeons” all over their neighborhood that the immigration bureau pays for providing information (Miller 1960, 18). Eddie’s devotion to his family is stronger than the one for community. He especially does not want Beatrice or Catherine to be involved in case that Rodolpho and Marco get picked up. So even at this moment, before Rodolpho and Marco arrive, it is apparent that Eddie’s loyalty to his own family is the most important.

As mentioned above, betrayal is frightening for this ethnic community and the consequences of disloyalty, as demonstrated on Vinny’s example, are horrifying. Eddie’s possessiveness over Catherine is the driving force that pushes him to betray the society. Blinded by his feelings for his niece, Eddie breaks the confidentiality of the community and puts himself beyond the sympathy of his neighbors. He shows that it is not the community but his own need that is the most important for him. From the moment he calls the immigration bureau his life as an insider of a community is doomed, and he no longer belongs there. It is certain that his death was Catharsis for him, as he would be exiled from his neighborhood and estranged to everybody he knew in his life. The only person willing to maintain relationship with him is his wife.

It is worth noting that the way Miller focuses on betrayal in *A View from the Bridge* might be given by the period in which it was written, the McCarthy era. As many other playwrights of that time (e.g. Odets, Hellman), Miller was politically leaning to the left and was a frequent participant in leftist meetings. Whereas some playwrights such as

Odets often expressed their political beliefs in their plays directly, Miller dissociates himself with these practices. He comments on the diverse judgement in his autobiography.

[...] we were trapped into estimating writers by what they stood for rather than by what they were actually doing, by the critical propaganda surrounding the rather than by their literary deeds (Miller 1987, 228).

*A View from the Bridge* was written in times of political blacklisting and the “ideological disciplining” of film writers, actors, and directors (Miller 1987, 149). Miller strongly opposed the politics of Joseph McCarthy and his investigation of the left (BBC 4, 1:38). Unlike Miller, his friend Elia Kazan, whom Miller “loved like a brother” decided to cooperate with the committee and betrayed Miller’s colleagues who had attended “meetings of Party writers” (ibid 334). Miller grew frightened when he realized that his friend would sacrifice him as well if he had known that he also attended the meetings (ibid 335).

Although it is true that *A View from the Bridge* was based on a different story of betrayal, the treachery of his closest friend gave Miller an insight to the value of loyalty and betrayal. It was at that time when Miller started to think that “all relationships had become relationships of advantage or disadvantage” and at the very same time he wrote the allegory on the figurative witch-hunts of Joseph McCarthy in 1950s America, *The Crucible* (Miller 1987, 335). In this play, the false accusations of Abigail, who is driven by revenge, destroy lives of innocent people, similarly like those who were accused in the McCarthy hearings.

It may appear that Eddie and Elia Kazan’s disloyalty is not random. Eddie puts his needs before the family and community, the same way as Kazan put his career in front of the lives of other people. They both aim for a personal goal and do not consider or do not want to consider the consequences it will have upon others, if not their own for that matter. However, Eddie’s character is based on a real person; it does not imply that Miller could not be inspired by his former friend. As the playwright admits in his biography, he did not know the real ‘Eddie’ personally so it is quite possible that Eddie and Kazan are in a way alike.

The moral conflict between loyalty and betrayal has been a central theme in tragedies since the ancient times to the period of modern American drama and now, i.e. Euripides's loyal wife Medea was betrayed by her husband Jason and consequently lost her idea of what is right and what is wrong, or Shakespeare's Hamlet was exposed to a difficult decision to stay loyal to his murdered father or betray him, etc. Miller's contemporary, Lillian Hellman also put betrayal in the centre of her play *The Little Foxes*. The motive to break both moral and criminal laws conveys in a "quest for money." Having alienated her family, Regina is at the end of the play left, even though rich, yet completely alone (Abbotson 54). The conflict between right and wrong is basic to Hegel's conception of tragedy.

To summarize, the concepts of loyalty and betrayal are themes which make the play universal. In his autobiography Miller remembers a man who appeared regularly at the performances of *A View from the Bridge* in New York. Miller asked the man about the reason for his frequent visits and the man said he knew the same family as the Carbones, except it turned out differently. "The girl came in when Eddie was having his nap and stabbed him in the heart." He was not talking about a family from Red Hook but another family from the Bronx. Nevertheless, they experienced the same calamity as the Carbones, only it ended differently for them since, in the Bronx, different rules applied (Miller 1987, 437).

When experiencing *A View from the Bridge* as a reader or spectator, one may recognize his own motives in Eddie's. Surely, everybody has heard about stories in which a friend stabbed another friend in the back, a family member betrayed another for money, or other examples of people failing another member of their community for an internal motive. Lawyers like Alfieri, who hear such stories every day, are bound by a promise of confidentiality. Miller thought that artist's job was to "remind people of what they have chosen to forget." Not only does he uncover a different culture than the American one, but he also gives people a chance to stop and think about their own motives and where they can lead them.

[...] the most common experience of humanity, the shifts of interests that turned loving husbands and wives into stony enemies, loving parents into indifferent supervisors or even exploiters of their children, and so forth (Miller 1987, 335).

Such a perspective is not only moral but also brings the pleasure that tragedy brings, the pleasure that comes from the recognition of pity and fear of the loss of meaning in life, feelings which we all have from time to time (Butcher 22).

## 7. CONCLUSION

As this thesis points out, Arthur Miller considered *A View from the Bridge* a successful attempt at Greek tragedy. Under the working title *Italian Tragedy*, the play represented an experiment for him. In the following paragraphs I would like to highlight the aspects of *A View* which resemble the ancient form the most.

One of the most valuable devices is the narrator, who plays a similar role as did a traditional device of Greek tragedy, the Chorus. Alfieri is the voice of the society and connects the sophisticated population of New York to the slum of Red Hook. Moreover, he represents a connection between the audience and the action happening on the stage. He comments on the proceedings as they occur and, like the Chorus of antiquity, sometimes takes part in the action, appears between scenes as well as opens and closes the play. Also, the narrator here is the device that foreshadows the actions which will follow and provides the audience with valuable insights. From his words the spectators learn what the ending of Eddie's story is before the actions start. The practice creates dramatic irony, a common strategy used by the pioneers of tragedy – Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

Due to its universal and perennial themes, *A View from the Bridge* has been performed and translated around the world ever since its first production in 1955. In the earlier version of *A View* the original metrical arrangement of the diction of tragedy was preserved; the play was written in verse and, as Greek tragedy, in one act. Miller wrote it as one storyline of growing intensity and gathering catastrophe. However, the author later adapted these experimental techniques when the play entered commercial theatres and provided a more realistic play containing the viewpoints of other characters.

Even though the play is performed in two acts, the mounting intensity has been maintained. In the first act Eddie challenges Rodolpho's masculinity in a rather facetious way. At the end of the first act, Marco takes his brother's side and challenges Eddie in return. Act Two is more emotional than Act One; the pace is more rapid and the ruptures between characters more intense. The actions lead up to the explosive climax of the play – the downfall of the hero.

This intensity of the plot provides for suspense, which is not present in Greek tragedies. Moreover, pathos is masterly handled in the play. The emotions of pity and fear rank among other essential features associated with this dramatic form.

In *a View from the Bridge* pathos rises from the actions of the hero. It has been established that Eddie satisfies the quality of a classical Greek tragic hero except for one condition, he is not royalty. Otherwise, he is in accord with Aristotle's demand for a true-to-life character that is good with a good purpose. Nonetheless, as every tragic hero, Eddie's character suffers from an inner weakness. The hero's tragic flaw consists in his incestuous and anti-social feelings for his niece Catherine, and produces his tragic downfall.

This fatal ending is on one hand accidental, but on the other hand caused by the hero's self-destructive urge in the form of hubris. Moreover, his death is preceded by his loss of identity, a state Eddie is unable to cope with. Besides, the pathos is brought about not only by the fact that Eddie represents an undeserved victim, but also by the spectacular means enacted in the scenes of his suffering. All these qualities of the hero and his actions are typically Greek.

The tragic emotions are evoked by the combination of Peripeteia and Anagnorisis. The former of these two means is mastered more successfully than the latter and it encompasses all of Eddie's actions from his treacherous phone call until his death. Anagnorisis, on the other hand, appears only marginally in the play and most clearly in the moment when Eddie realizes the real impact of his deed upon his family, which comes too late.

*A View from the Bridge* raises universal issues such as the role of an individual in a society or community, tropes of manliness, betrayal and loyalty along with a range of conflicts including sexuality and sexual guilt, and others. For these timeless themes the play represents both a tragedy and a social drama which comments not only on the situation in 1950s America or in an Italian community, but also universally on contemporary human social relations in general, inside and outside of America. The internal conflict in Eddie's character and his ignorance of himself evoke the feelings of

pity and fear mainly because we can recognize ourselves in his motives. This possibility of identification with the hero is also essential for tragedy.

Furthermore, Miller's tragic hero is constructed upon Aristotle's rules. Eddie is *the* man; he is strong, protective of women and disparages the idea of men acting femininely, as he perceives Rodolpho. The characters in *A View from the Bridge* act upon the rule of probability or necessity, which is a key plot element in tragedy, crucial for its moral purpose. Both realistic imitation and the observance of this rule can be found in many realistically depicted plays, and *A View* fits this paradigm.

To conclude, it is necessary to point out to the fact that tragedies, whether they were written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., in the Renaissance, or today, satisfy universal conditions. The form influenced people then and does so today; the subject matter has been remade for our era. Tragedies have inspired people around the world regardless of gender, nationality, race, religion or culture. The main features underlying its universal quality are its lasting themes.

Of course, the themes of a drama reflect the particular society in which it was written. Whilst in Greek tragedy one can experience a lot of hatred, cruelty and murder among the royal dynasties, nowadays tragedies bring a more sophisticated plot, less blood and a less direct approach towards death. However, ancient Greek tragedies as well as Shakespeare's pieces have always been on stage, and people have not lost interest in them. Like other more recent plays, *A View from the Bridge* contains the lineaments of Greek tragedy. Reading or viewing Miller's play one can recognize how similar feelings such as love, envy, jealousy or mistrust could bring a tragic end in 20<sup>th</sup> century America as well as they could here and now.

## RESUMÉ

Divadelní hra *A View from the Bridge* amerického dramatika Arthura Millera, která v českém překladu vyšla pod názvem *Pohled z mostu*, je z jeho děl považována samým autorem za nejvěrnější zásadám řecké tragédie. Přestože tento dramatik často experimentoval s formou, v první polovině jeho tvorby se věnoval především tomuto žánru, zejména ovšem tragédii moderní. Moje práce se zaměřila na prokázání tragického módu ve své prvotní formě této hry. Ačkoliv se tato problematika může zprvu zdát zcela triviální a zřejmá, názor na ni není jednostranný. Nejen díky různým pohledům světových filosofů, dramatiků či jiných spisovatelů, moderních i klasických, ale i díky různým prvkům této hry je na dílo pohlíženo nejednoznačně.

Po vydání první teorie tragédie vzniklo nespočet dalších, zabývajících se touto problematikou, ale mnoho z nich navazuje právě na tu, kterou napsal Aristotelés v 5. století před našim letopočtem, a není pochyb, že právě jeho definice jsou stále aktuální a většina moderních filosofů z jeho díla *Poetika (Poetics)* vychází. Ve svém spise tento antický filosof mimo jiné rozebírá jednotlivé části tragédie a určuje podmínky, které by měly tyto části splňovat, aby se jednalo o dílo tragické. Aristotelés rozdělil tragédii na 6 částí určujících její kvalitu takto: děj, postavy, dikce, myšlenka, předvedení a píseň. Děj může být buďto jednoduchý nebo složitý, záleží na tom, zda je v něm obsaženo takzvané *Anagnorisis* (rozpoznání), nebo *Peripeteia* (zvrát okolností), či obojí.

Jedno z hlavních kritérií pro dosažení tragičnosti je *patos*, neboli vyvolání pocitů lítosti a strachu, které k tragédii neodmyslitelně patří. Toho lze dosáhnout především kombinací situací, které obsahují rozpoznání, například skutečné identity některé z postav, a zvrátu okolností, kdy například hlavní hrdina počítá s pozitivními důsledky svého činu, ale naopak se vše zvrhne k opačnému konci. Pocity lítosti a strachu lze dále také vyvolat spektakulárními prostředky, což je ovšem méně umělecké a svědčí o méně zdatném poetovi.

Tragické postavy musí konat na základě pravidla nutnosti nebo pravděpodobnosti protože napodobují hrdiny skutečné a jejich opravdové činy. Toto napodobování označuje Aristotéles slovem *mimesis*. Dodržením těchto pravidel nabývají dílo i postavy

univerzálního významu. Tragický hrdina musí být vskutku dobrý, s dobrými úmysly a věruhodný. Je ovšem postižen chybou, která zapříčiní jeho kolaps.

Kombinací a dodržením těchto základních a dalších zásad vzniká dílo tragické. Mezi filosofy, kteří se zabývali problematikou tragédie patří G.W.F. Hegel, který za nejdůležitější prvek považuje tragický konflikt mezi dvěma substantivními silami. Další, kdo analyzoval tragédii, byl Friedrich Nietzsche, který považuje tragédii za mrtvou divadelní formu již od dob Euripida a obzvláště nyní, jelikož pro Nietzscheho představovala nejdůležitější část tragédie souboj mezi dionýským a apollónským pólem. Okrajově jsou v této práci zmíněny postoje dalších filosofů, mezi nimi také názory samotného Arthura Millera.

Miller se zabýval rozdíly mezi antickou a moderní formou tragédie a dospěl k názoru, že tragický mód je zastaralý. V moderní době je tragickým hrdinou obyčejný člověk, nikoliv urozeného původu, který ovšem pracuje na stejných myšlenkových procesech jako urozený hrdina řecký, jako byl například Oidipus. Miller ovšem není považován za průkopníka amerického moderního divadla či realistického směru v Americe ve 20. století. Hlavním přínosem byl Eugene O'Neill. Miller sice nepřiznává, že by ho O'Neillova tvorba ovlivnila, ale není pochyb o tom, že některá jejich díla vykazují mnoho podobných prvků, ať už v podobě žánrů či témat. Mezi další dramatiky, kteří se často s Millerem setkávali nejen v divadle, ale také v soukromém životě, patří Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, či Tennessee Williams.

Dramatická tvorba Arthura Millera je velmi bohatá. Hra *Pohled z mostu* byla napsána na počátku jeho kariéry v padesátých letech. V té době byl již uznávaným dramatikem především díky hrám *Všichni moji synové* z roku 1947 (*All My Sons*) a *Smrt obchodního cestujícího* z roku 1949 (*Death of a Salesman*). Tyto realistické hry se značně podobají hře *Pohled z mostu*. Poukazují na nedostatky a mylné představy o americké společnosti. Miller kritizuje její proměnu řízenou velkými podniky a to, v jaké pozici se nachází pracovní třída. Američtí občané se stali součástí pracovní komunity a jako osobití jedinci se projevují především v domácím prostředí. Willy Loman, hrdina hry *Smrt obchodního cestujícího*, žije ve světě mylných iluzí a představách, že je známý a uznávaný obchodní cestující. Své syny učí tomu, že receptem k úspěchu je věhlas a

sláva. Willy není schopen vyrovnat se s realitou a jeho představy ho přivedou do záhuby.

Další hra, zabývající se tématem zkorumpovanosti společnosti, je *Všichni moji synové*. Zde Joe Keller, také otec dvou synů, v honbě za penězi, prodával armádě vadné díly do letadel, což způsobilo smrt nejen několika anonymních vojáků ale také jeho syna, který poté co zjistil, jakého otřesného činu se jeho otec dopustil, spáchal sebevraždu. Když pravda o této smrti vyjde shodou náhod na povrch, Joe se zastřelí.

Miller se odvážil psát nejen o tehdejší americké společnosti, ale také o dávné koloniální komunitě. Po nastudování historie Nové Anglie, především dob, kdy vládla městem Salem hysterie okolo čarodějnických procesů, napsal v roce 1953 dílo *Zkouška ohněm (The Crucible)*. Tato hra je obecně považována za alegorii, kritizující vyšetřování Výboru pro neamerickou činnost v čele se senátorem Josephem McCarthym v padesátých letech 20. Století.

Moje práce dokazuje, že prvky tragédie jsou podstatně viditelné nejen v *Pohledu z mostu*, ale také v předem zmíněných hrách. Jak odhaluje v první díl praktické části této práce, všichni tři hrdinové těchto her mají tragickou podstatu. Jejich charakter trpí tzv. *Hamartií*, tragickou chybou která je vede k (sebe)záhubě. Pro všechny tři hrdiny je jejich smrt způsobena kombinací vlastního zavinění a souběhem vnějších okolností, což je pro řecké tragédie typické a což vyvolává v publiku pocity strachu a lítosti. Všichni tři hrdinové se navíc na začátku jejich příběhů jeví jako prosperující muži, kdežto na konci jsou zlomení.

Miller představil tragédii v její antické formě především ve hře *Pohled z mostu*. Jak ukazuje analýza této hry, nejvíce ji od jeho moderních tragédií odlišuje postava vypravěče, který zastává, a v mnoha aspektech připomíná, chór. Vypravěč Alfieri představuje hlas lidu a spojuje populaci velkoměsta s chudinskou oblastí Red Hook v Brooklynu, kde se odehrává děj této hry. Alfieri se zapojuje do událostí jen zřídka, jeho pozice je spíše komentátorská. Náplní jeho role je udávat morální podstatu věcí a tímto nepřímo ovlivňovat názory diváků. Z jeho slov se také na samém začátku hry publikum dozví, že Eddieho čeká tragický konec, což není běžné pro moderní, ale pro klasické tragédie.

Dalším prvkem, kterým se Millerova tragédie přibližuje řecké je, že je utvořena na základě skutečných událostí. Millerovy postavy a děj, který se v jejich bezprostřední blízkosti odehrává, se stal legendou v tamní komunitě. Millera natolik zaujal příběh zrady jednoho z Italských emigrantů, který poslal cizineckou policii na své příbuzné, protože žárlil na svoji neteř, že se rozhodl více prozkoumat jejich rodnou zemi Itálii, především ostrov Sicílii, odkud pocházela tato rodina. Tomuto poznatku je přikládána váha, protože řecké tragédie byly přepracované verze legend, které byly pro divadelní návštěvníky obecně známé. Millerova tragédie, stejně jako řecká není napínavá, ale zaujímá diváky jinými prostředky.

Děj *Pohledu z mostu* je tragický, začíná prologem, na který navazuje parode, první věta chóru. Chór má podobu vznešeného Alfieriho, který svou poetickou mluvou uvede diváky do děje. Eddie, hrdina této tragédie, je představen jako muž s dobrým srdcem, avšak už v této chvíli se dozvídáme, že jeho osud bude nešťastný. Také konec poslední scény hry je věnovaný právě Alfierimu, který má za úkol, stejně jako řecký chór, prozradit morální ponaučení.

Přestože hra nedisponuje napětím, je cítit zvyšující se intenzita děje. Ve druhém dějství je atmosféra vypjatější než v prvním a roztržky mezi postavami ostřejší. Hra celkově nabírá rychlejší tempo. Finální souboj mezi Eddiem a Marcem představuje vyvrcholení hry. Eddieho smrt je způsobena jak jeho pýchou a nechotou se přizpůsobit, tak shodou okolností které vedou k jeho smrti vlastní zbraní, jež plánoval použít proti Marcovi. Jeho smrt by nenastala, nebýt tragické chyby, kterou je jeho osobnost zasažena a skýtá se v jeho lásce ke své neteři.

Konstrukce finální scény a okolnosti jí předcházející vyvolávají v obecnstvu patos, neboli pocity lítosti a strachu, které jsou pro řeckou tragédii podstatné. Miller dosáhl patosu právě těmito spektakulárními prostředky, dále také zakomponoval *Peripeteii* a *Anagnorisis*, z nichž Peripeteia je značně zřetelnější a spočívá v Eddieho představách o tom, jak mu jeho zrádcofský čin pomůže k znovuzískání přízně jeho neteře. Tyto představy se ale ukáží naprosto scestné a situace se zvrhne v opak. Nejprve Eddie ztratí svoji identitu a poté umírá v tzv. scéně utrpení, která je typická pro konec řecké tragédie. Zajištění tragických emocí rovněž spočívá v tom, že Eddie umírá nezaslouženě.

Tyto a další prvky *Pohledu z mostu* určují tragickou podstatu hry. Více prvků by bylo možné nalézt v původní verzi této tragédie, která je psaná v jednom dějství, verši a je zaměřena především na hlavního hrdinu. Miller se jí ovšem z komerčních důvodů rozhodl přepsat.

*Pohled z mostu* oslovuje čtenáře a diváky bez ohledu na pohlaví, národnost, rasu, náboženství či kulturu. Témata jako zrada a odvaha, postavení člověka ve společnosti, mužnost, čest, vina a žárlivost se objevují v tragédiích dob minulých i současných. *Pohled z mostu* se tak stává společenským dramatem, které představuje mezilidské vztahy uvnitř i mimo Ameriku a každý jedinec má tak možnost ztotožnit se s jeho hrdinou.

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