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THE INNER CONFLICT OF THE PROTAGONIST OF ARTHUR MILLER'S "A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE"

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ABSTRACT:

Arthur Miller's "A View from the Bridge" presents the 'the psychological alienation of its hero Addie Carbone from his actual self which ultimately leads to his final estrangement from his fellow beings and then from the human world itself. The play is also typically a modern tragedy in which the tragic hero elicits our sympathy while, at the same time accepting the responsibilities for the catastrophe he brings on his own head. Eddie is a creature of his environment as well as an exception to it which helps him perhaps to become a tragic figure in the action of the play that is to follow. The abstract concepts of his community, impersonal institutions, dehumanized relationships create inordinate anxiety and fear in the heart of the protagonist — whether he would ever be

able to establish rapport with his fellow beings and maintain his identity.

KEYWORDS: environment , dehumanized relationships , protagonist.

INTRODUCTION

Initially what all the protagonist hopes for is prestige and simple organic ties with the people of his community of pre-industrial era. But presently he appears to have been stricken with a deep fear by the destructive competitiveness unreconciled mores and principles and attitudes of social obligations of life. It is this fear, that motivates Eddie to hate his own pitiful self for facing competition and consequently runs away from it. It is due to the assessment of his 'actual self' that there generates anxiety and its concomitant fear that clearly explains' the alienation' and Eddie's

compulsive need to establish prestige and identity for himself. The root cause of Eddie's anxiety and helplessness partly stems from his inferiority complex, who is a poor dock worker. His chief inferiority complex is that he has no child, that he has not been able to make his wife pregnant, and now as a lover also he estimates himself as an unfit. It should be highly relevant to remember the comment of the playwright about Eddie Carbone:

"The mind of Eddie Carbone is not comprehensible apart from its relation to his neighbourhood, his fellow-workers, his social situation. His self-esteem depends up on their estimate of him, and his value is created largely by his fidelity to the code of his culture."(1) The

fillowing revelation of Eddie in his conversation with the lawyer Alfieri : " What can I do ? I'm a patsy, what can a patsy do ? 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 coming in the harbor. " (2) By rejecting this mediocre pitiful self, Eddie has formed up a grandiose image of himself that lie will be welcomed, loved, accepted, appreciated and so on. More important to remember is that this was all done unconsciously. To this was added an unconscious drive to exploit people making it imperative for him to keep in their good graces. Consequently, the dependence on others was aggravated by a compulsive need for approval

and affection, combined with the attitudes of compliance and appeasement.

In this manner there is created an 'inner conflict' in Eddie's personality between destructive, aggressive reactive rage and sadistic impulses on the hand, and on the other, the need for affection and approval with a desire to appear fair and rational in his own eyes and that of others. The result is the inner upheaval that goes unnoticed while the fatigue, that is its external manifestation, paralyzes all his action. The effect makes him feel so weak that he loses confidence in his own work. Now having looked at the factors involved in the conflict, we are struck first by their incompatibility. It would be difficult indeed to imagine more extreme opposites than lordly demands for deference and ingratiating submissiveness. And Eddie is driven on either hand by compelling forces over which he has no control. As Eddie can not sustain the agonizing conflict, he is inevitably driven to choose some protective device as solution to his problem. The result is neurotic 'need for affection' an attitude which conceals the hidden conflicts. Hence Eddie in his action exhibits a marked need for affection and approval, especially the need for a 'partner' that is, lover or wife who is to fulfill all expectations of life and take responsibility for good and evil, his successful manipulation becoming the predominant task:

Thus Eddie's needs become compulsive and indiscriminate all that center around the desire for human intimacy, a drive for 'belonging'. Because of the indiscriminate nature of his needs Eddie over-rates his congeniality. But his misjudging of people this way is not due to his ignorance or stupidity but is determined by his compulsive needs. His blindness is due to the unending agony that comes from his gradual inexorable realization that the world and himself are a parting company. The world it seems to him, is conspiring to ignore his existence and betray his feeling. Hence Eddie challenges Marco and invites Rodolpho for mock fight only to overcome the feeling of weakness and inferiority. He feels that he is not as efficient as Rodolpho in the matter of love; his not as aggressive as these people are (Marco), and also, that even his wife considers him a much inferior person as to the reason why he doesn't care to see her for months. But actually where the character errs is in claiming that all his frantic beatings for affection and approval is genuine, while in reality the genuine portion is heavily overshadowed by his insatiable urge to feel safe. He tries automatically to live up to the expectations of others to the extent that he stops caring for his own feelings. He becomes compliant, over considerate with Catherine at home. Eddie begins to flatter her like a lover though she is much younger to him and the social code does not permit him to do so:

Eddie: "With your hair that way you look like a madonna,
You know that? You're the madonna type." (3)

All these qualities sharply indicate Eddie's alienation from his real self, that is, he does not consult his own feelings but gives blindly to others all that he is driven to want from her 'love'. All his actions are over-rated only due to the fear of profound disturbance if the returns fail to materialize. Not knowing that it is his own anxiety which creates the situation, Eddie easily assumes that his subjugation has been brought about by the hostile world. We know that it is only the over-rated generosity of Eddie that made his home unbearable for Catherine. But Eddie himself doesn't understand why Cathy could not even bear to be in the same home with him. But these doubts in turns lead to the waking of his own guilt feelings. That he is a chronic defaulter and inordinately sexual. But even lawyer Alfieri doesn't believe that anything can stop Eddie even though Cathy is his niece. Eddie's unacceptable impulse is his love for Cathy who is his blood relation, his niece, who is much junior to him in age. His helplessness is that in an Italian endogamous society, his relationship with Cathy is considered incestuous. He is enclosed in a smothering chamber of morality. Thus Eddie can not confess his love openly too. He goes to the lawyer Alfieri for the approval of his love but the lawyer fails to analyze his problem.. On the contrary, Alfieri only aggravates anxiety of Eddie:

Alfieri: Yes, but these things have to end, Eddie, that's all. The Child has to grow up and so away, and the man has to learn to forget. Because after all, Eddie what other way can it end!...let her go. That's my advice. You did your job, now it's her life, wish her luck and let her go ... (4)

In the process Eddie tries for a temporary unity against his 'inner conflict' by suppressing his real aggressive feelings in order to exist and work smoothly. But this artificial unity or his unconscious efforts to keep the repressed impulses from operating or asserting themselves cannot be sustained any longer. The accumulated repressed hostility explodes and soon a ventilation is sought for its release. Hence Eddie's hatred against Rodolpho and Marco: "

Eddie :When there was empty piers in Brooklyn I went to Hoboken, Staten Island, the West Side, Jersey, all over because I made promise. I took out of my own mouth to her. I walked hungry plenty days in this city !...And now I gotta sit in my own house and look at a sonofabitch punk like that which lie came out no where ; I give him my house to sleep ; I take the blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his dirty filthy hands on her (Cathy) like a goddam thief ! " (5)

The above quote is only to show what Eddie has done for Rodolpho and for Cathy, what he feels about her and also how he is suffering for her love. With the entry of Rodolpho he feels that a serpent has entered in to his garden and is threatening day in and day out. These are only some impatient comments of Eddie upon the way the house is going on. All these words are the neurotic's outburst which is nothing but the result of his own unresolved 'inner conflicts.' To this extent, Eddie also shows a marked resemblance to the symptoms of schizophrenic and it shows that he has a tendency to treat reality as it were strange to him, the tendency which is so predominant in Eddie. In fact this is what accounts for the ambiguity and contradiction in his action. But if we examine the play closely and juxtapose the 'inner world' of Eddie and the outside society, we do not fail to recognize the immense social significance which the playwright is trying to impose. The ambiguity or the contradictory nature that is associated with the character of Eddie is also present in human beings who in their daily lives also confront a world that has split up into series of disconnected fragments. But they are no longer aware of this state of affairs and its disintegrating effect on their personalities. And it is the concern of Arthur Miller to bring the audience face to face with a heightened representation of the schizophrenic universe. In fact Eddie's own conflicting tendencies bar the way to the love and affection he craves for. While this inevitably marks his gradual alienation from others, the various implications of his neurotic need for love lead ultimately to the formation of a 'vicious circle' in which there will not be any escape for Eddie. Thus the very means which serve to reassure against anxiety create in turn new hostility and new anxiety, leaving no scope for escape.

Eddie is conscious only in searching solution to his anxieties but he himself cannot grasp their implications which in turn lead to the formation of 'vicious circles', Marking his damnation both physically and spiritually. He realizes their consequences only in the form of a feeling that lie is trapped in a hopeless situation. This feeling of being trapped is his reaction to entanglements which he cannot break through.

When the protagonist fundamentally feels helpless toward a world which is invariably menacing and hostile, his search for affection would be most logical. But when this 'affection' is denied he is at a loss to understand why his friendship, marriage, love affairs, are so often dissatisfactory. He tends to conclude that others are at fault, that they are inconsiderate, and disloyal, that he lacks, for some unfathomable 'reason, the gift of being popular. Thus he keeps chasing the phantom of love. Now love often appears to him as the only goal worth striving for, worth living for without which life appears flat futile and empty. Love promises to satisfy the need to be liked and thus establish his prestige (through love) ; it permits him to live out all his aggressive drives on a justified, innocent or even praise worthy basis, while allowing him at the same time to express all the endearing qualities he has acquired. He also brings his suffering and helplessness to the attention of others and tries to obtain affection by appealing to pity. Eddie also begins to realize that he is "slipping down the drain". He desperately struggles to cling to anything through whatever means that is available. But all his efforts inevitably result in vain. Eddie's gradual receding sense of reality leads to a total incapacity for objective relationship. Moreover, Eddie's emotional dependence on his wife and Cathy for 'love' produce a very realistic and justified fear that his life is being ruined. When this fear of 'not getting love' is increased he decides to withdraw from his wife and Cathy compulsively.

Consequently, Eddie's focus now shifts to self-esteem in his community which substitutes his unsuccessful attempts at seeking love. Now Eddie himself being a victim of passion of love and jealousy decides to betray his Longshoremen community by 'informing' against the submarines (Marco and Rodolpho). Because he feels that he is cheated by his own people at home. He gets a rebuff from Cathy; Marco and Rodolpho as a rule should have been more grateful to Eddie than attached to their cousin. Beatrice, his wife does not care for his feelings; despite his "orders" Cathy goes out with Rodolpho and marries him. She tells Marco: "To hell with Eddie. Nobody is gonna talk to him again if he lives to a hundred." (6) And earlier Marco publicly, spits into Eddie's face and that hurts Eddie's self-esteem as well as his social image. Consequently Eddie suffers not only the 'guilt' of the violation of the norms of his society but he experiences shame too. In order to get rid of the shame, Eddie may seek to prove that he is not weak and can outdo the person who shamed him. Eddie challenges Marco and invites Rodolpho for a mock fight only to overcome the feeling of weakness and inferiority. He feels that he is not as efficient as Rodolpho; he is not as aggressive as these people are, and also, that even his wife considers him a much inferior person. This complex leads him to complete neurosis. There is an admixture of guilt and shame in him. Outwardly, he demands his name, his lost dignity, but inwardly he knows that his name cannot be restored, so he feels ashamed. Shame does not necessarily require the violation of standards of the super ego. Eddie gradually realizes his mistake, that he is in conflict with social ideals and values. He realizes that he is in the grip of primitive impulses and that he is involved in a disapproved act. He feels inhibited, blocked and repressed.

The irony is that in a fit of passion Eddie commits the very act which he is shown earlier to abhor so much in another person. He is fully aware of the consequences of a breach of code and he even cautions Catherine against leaking out any information about Marco and Rodolpho. Recounting the story of Vinny Balzano who betrayed his uncle and informed against him to the Immigration Bureau; his wife, Beatrice, also recalls: "

Oh, it was terrible. He had five brothers and the old Father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs-three flights his head was bouncing like a coconut. And they spit on him in the street, his own father and his brothers. The whole neighbourhood was crying." (6)

When Catherine innocently asks, "So what happened to him?" Eddie replies, "Him? You'll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How's he gonna show his face?" (7) The underlying irony is that Eddie understands the horror of doing "a thing like that" and yet he goes ahead and does it. In transgressing against his community Eddie violates the ethics of a "polis." By Transgression against his community Eddie crumbles under the social pressures. Consequently Marco and Rodolpho, and two other submarines are arrested. Thus Eddie's desperate act threatens the very life of the community. Catherine, who had been sympathetic to him so far, turns against him and derides him. She calls him "a rat" who "belongs to the sewer" and who "bites people when they sleep! He comes when nobody's looking and poisons decent people. In the garbage he belongs!" (8)

Now Eddie has face a social boycott. Ironically, Eddie is on the verge of losing his 'grandiose self', his 'idealized self' of esteem of prestige in whose pursuit he started his journey of alienation from his 'actual self' as poor dock worker which was despised by him long back. But in process he entangled himself in such a 'vicious circle' from which he cannot breakthrough. Now at this juncture he cannot go back to the beginning either because it should be equal to chasing another mirage. And the protagonist does not have any middle ground to fall back upon also. Now the only choice left before him is to survive his social prestige and self esteem at any cost.

As a result, the protagonist voluntarily chooses to struggle heroically to regain his lost image in the community as well as make atonement for his guilt by embracing himself with a violent death. Now Eddie's anger is no longer directed towards his niece and Rodolpho (he is even willing to attend their wedding), but against Marco since he is the one who publicly spoiled his name. When Beatrice asks him what more he wants, Eddie replies: "I want my name! Marco's got my name!...he's gonna give it back to me in front of this neighbourhood, or we have it out" (9) For Eddie the name has a double significance. In the first place, it is a mark of identification and connection with others; secondly it is a symbol of personal integrity and social prestige. Eddie cannot live without it. He flings back the challenge at Marco

who is evidently a stronger man. Mark the following dialogue : " Eddie : Marco (calling near the door outside): Eddie Carbone ! Eddie (as though flinging his challenge) : Yeah, Marco ! Eddie Carbone ! Eddie Carbone ! Eddie Carbone ! " (10)

He repeats his won name in a self dramatizing manner in order to win back lost recognition in public. Eddie exposes himself to a potential danger to receive punishment for his guilt ; for his so-called misdeed, for his unacceptable impulse. But he does not give up his sense of grandiose uptill the last moment of his life, he keeps uttering : " Eddie : No, Marco knows what's right from wrong. Tell the people Maarci, tell them what a liar you are ! (He has his arms) spread and Marco is spreading his.) Come on, liar, you know what you done !... You lied about the, Marco. Now say it. Come on now, say it. " (11)

This aggression is for atonement. Closely connected to aggression is a sense of sacrifice. Eddie " Lunges with 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" Falling to his knees before Marco is symbolic of thr realization of his sin and also a complete cessation of his feeling of guilt. His aggression is not to attack but to invite death. Eddie's fmal utterances are proof of his complete realization of his guilt. His fmal identification with the ' idealized self ' puts an end to his tormenting inner psychological conflict. In an attempt to regain his self-esteem and social reputation Eddie deliberately gets killed by Marco who is obviously stronger than himself. Later, he falls dead in his wife's arms signifying the tragic awakening on the part of the protagonist as he is able to recognize the vitality of his relationship with his wife rather than Cathy. It also gives strength to his personal and public sense of respect besides giving him a place in the community. The lawyer Alfieri pays him a great and deserving tribute in the end by saying : " He allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I will love him more than all my sensible clients ". (12)

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