

A View from the Bridge

How does Miller present conflict in '*A View from the Bridge*'?

Integral within Miller's "A View from the Bridge" is the presentation of the theme of conflict, which is most clearly portrayed through his characterisation of Eddie. However, notably, whilst Eddie's hamartia (his lack of self awareness in relation to his attraction to his niece) is contributory to this. Rodolfo and Marco are also intrinsic in exacerbating domestic tension and creating conflict by revealing Eddie's tragic flaw.

One of the most prominent examples of conflict within "A View from the Bridge" is the manner by which Eddie treats Rodolfo. Rodolfo is Eddie's antithesis and it is the dichotomy of their two character traits that Miller uses as a source of tension between the protagonist and his foil. This is evident when Eddie initially uses his suspicions of Rodolfo's homosexuality as a façade for his attraction to his niece: stating to Alfieri that "the guy ain't right" and that "you could kill him, he was so sweet". Here, whilst stymied by his inability to fully articulate himself, Eddie makes blatant that Rodolfo has effeminate character traits that connote homosexuality. This is reinforced later in the first act when Eddie draws direct comparisons between himself and Rodolfo in an attempt to understand why Rodolfo is so successful in his endeavours with Catherine: "he can cook, he can sing, he could make dresses"....."I can't cook, I can't sing, I can't make dresses". Here Miller highlights how Rodolfo's effeminacy and success in his relationship with Catherine are pivotal as a source of tension between himself and the central protagonist. Notably, whilst Eddie's attempts to discredit Rodolfo become gradually more explicit throughout the first act of the play, it is Rodolfo and not Eddie who Catherine chooses as a lover. This is perhaps most strongly conveyed by the symbolic "dance" scene between Catherine and Rodolfo, whereby Rodolfo takes Catherine away from Eddie. The tone of domestic tension and a lack of familial bonding is furthered by the stage direction whereby Eddie is "unconsciously twisting the newspaper". As this is an action associated with deep anger it highlights how friction between Eddie and Rodolfo is building and foreshadows act of treachery in the play's peripeteia, which leads to conflict.

Eddie's relationship with Marco is also pivotal in causing conflict within "A View from the Bridge". Following Eddie's more hostile nature towards Rodolfo, Marco highlights his strength and power in a way that is not explicit, but is instead uses visual imagery to indicate the risk associated with treating Rodolfo in such an unfavourable manner. The stage directions state that the "chair [was] raised like a weapon over [Eddie's] head". This simile, reinforced by the use of the militaristic lexis ("weapon") highlights how conflict between Eddie and Marco is becoming more and more imminent and is perhaps prophetic of Eddie's dream in the second act of the play. This is reinforced further given that this scene of violence is also intrinsic in causing the play's peripeteia.

Perhaps the single most important action that causes conflict in play is Eddie's act of treachery in the play's peripeteia. Despite Alfieri's warning's that he "won't have a friend in the world", Eddie is drawn to the "phonebooth", which "glow[s] on the opposite side of the stage", Miller's use of lighting here perhaps symbolically represents the triumph of Eddie's desperation over his conscience. This critical change in circumstance means that it is too late for Eddie to alter his fate and will undeniably be unable to reach a state of anagnorsis. However this action itself is not an example of conflict but instead highlights how Eddie's self-destructive nature will mean further conflict with the play's antagonist (Marco).

When the immigration officers arrive at Eddie's house in order to arrest Rodolfo and Marco, the play's first climax, Eddie is "accuse[d]" by Marco and the concept of tragic inevitability that was alluded to in Alfieri's opening soliloquy. It seems that the player on the stage and the audience are "powerless" to stop Eddie engaging in conflict with Marco and that ultimately there is no choice but to watch tension and violence run its "bloody course".

Eddie's conflict with Marco builds to the play's climax whereby Eddie dies by his own hand, a metaphor for his own reference and by his own weapon, perhaps symbolic of his sexuality. Eddie's inability to relinquish his hubris and his unrelenting aim to regain his "name" presents Eddie from reaching any form of reconciliation in the final scene and instead highlights the dramatic conventions of a Greek tragedy, through the cathartic final scene, which results in the demise of the central protagonist as a result of conflict.

Whilst, on a rather superficial level, the conflict between Eddie and Marco is pivotal in Miller's presentation of the theme of violence and tension, ultimately it is Rodolfo that exacerbates domestic tension to the greatest degree and allows Eddie to experience the greatest conflict of all – a moral conflict. As Beatrice reminds Eddie in one of the play's final scenes that he "can never have" Catherine, Eddie's hamartia is revealed and he is unable to regain either his "name" or his pride. Miller chronicles the fall of a common man, but highlights also how Eddie was morally conflicted by his attraction to Catherine. This is evident when despite Beatrice's pleas, asking "when am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?", it's almost three months you don't feel good" "It's three months" – Eddie is unable to see that his hamartia is right before him – his lack of self awareness. Beatrice's anaphoric repetition highlights how she feels unhappy about the state of their marriage, and at times does not even feel like a wife. This marital conflict is also integral within Miller's "A View from the Bridge".

As the typical 1950s man, Eddie reinforces the stereotypical character traits of a working man and the patriarchal society that was prevalent at that time. Eddie's conflict with Catherine regarding her attire is almost depicted as casual by Miller, perhaps to highlight the social immaturity of the time when the play was written (1955). It is Rodolfo's brash and effusive nature and even his physical features, which Eddie quickly picks up on ("Blondie, Paper Doll") and reveals a sense of cultural conflict (Italian and American) within this modern day Greek tragedy. Eddie's overprotectiveness is highlighted by Eddie stating: "don't aggravate me, Katie, you are walkin' wavy", the use of a negative imperative, a diminutive and an idiomatic expression highlights how Eddie's overbearing nature will undoubtedly be a source of conflict later in the play and that eventually Catherine will try to escape the encompassing patriarchy of her home, something that she does through her relationship with Rodolfo, which ultimately results in the play's peripeteia and conflict with Marco, which arises from an attempt to defend his brother.

In summation, Miller's "A View from the Bridge" deals with the theme of conflict through Eddie's relationship with Catherine, Rodolfo, Marco and Beatrice as well as the cultural conflict that has arisen from the difference in the manner Eddie and Rodolfo treat women. Miller, however, also chronicles the fall of the common man and a moral conflict as Eddie dies in a futile attempt to regain his "name" and relinquish Catherine.