

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Arthur Miller is one of the most distinguished American playwrights “whose biting criticism of societal problems defined his genius” (“Arthur Miller Biography”). Most of his major works are famous for their theme of individual responsibility towards the society, as can be seen in his *All My Sons*. His works also reflect that the major character has to fulfill the demands from his family and society which can be seen in his play, *A View from the Bridge*. Writing a lot of good works, Miller undoubtedly deserves his place in the list of the great playwrights. Even David Thacker, one of the British theatre directors states, that “if you put Shakespeare to one side, Arthur Miller stands comparison with any playwright writing in the English language for his contribution” (Walsh).

We can also see the play faintly resonates classical Greek drama with a twist between Miller and the ancient Greek tragedian, Sophocles. Both Miller and Sophocles have a tragic protagonist in their works; beside, they also use tragic flaw. Tragic flaw is “a secret weakness

of character that brings about a tragic hero's downfall" ("Tragic Flaw"). The tragic heroes in Miller's and Sophocles's have fatal weaknesses which later drag them to their downfall. In Sophocles' famous play, *Oedipus the King*, the main character loses everything at the end of the story. His pride causes him to be unwilling to accept his fate. Oedipus fights his own fate stubbornly that later causes his own downfall. The same happens to Eddie, the main character in *A View from the Bridge*. His ego causes him to make a fatal decision. He loses his family, his name, and even his life. At the beginning of the story, both of them were good people. However, they make bad decisions which later bring them to their own destruction.

There is also another similarity; both Oedipus and Eddie fall in love with their close relatives. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus marries his own mother. In *A View from the Bridge*, Eddie falls in love with his own niece who seems to be more like his daughter for him. Yet, there are also differences. At the end of the story, Oedipus realizes his mistakes and show his remorse by pulling out his own eyes. But not with Eddie, Eddie still denies his mistakes until the very end of the story, he even gets mad and does not accept the situation which has happened to him. Another differences also can be seen in the relation between the character's fate and gods. In *Oedipus* and other Greek drama, fate and gods have a big portion in determining the whole story. Another different things happen in Miller's play, gods do not be exposed here. Everything that happens in the story is an effect from the character's decision.

A View from the Bridge is based on a true story which Miller has heard from his colleague who worked as a lawyer in the piers area. *A View from the*

Bridge takes place in Brooklyn after the Second World War. This play comes from a story about a longshoreman who calls the Immigration to snitch on illegal immigrant in American-Italian society. He heard it while he was doing a research for his collaboration with Elia Kazan, whom Miller worked with in his plays, *All My Sons* and *The Death of the Salesman*.

Some critics believe that *A View from the Bridge* is one of the most interesting plays that Miller has written. Clive Barnes, an English writer and critic, states in *New York Post* that Miller's plays have their own intense power which entertains the audience in a great way. His plays entertain people at that time because immigration problem is very current topic and a great issue in the developing America as a state. The major element of this play lays on its conflicts. "Conflict is a literary element that involves a struggle between two opposing forces, usually a protagonist and an antagonist" ("Conflict - Examples and Definition of Conflict"). There are several conflicts between Eddie and people around him. Conflicts can be divided into inner, social and natural conflict ("Eight Basic Literary Devices"). Eddie's conflicts here are social conflicts because Eddie, as the protagonist, has opposing ideas with his family and society. According to Harry Shaw, social conflict is "a struggle between man and man" (91).

The conflicts also lead us to another issue of rivalry among Italian immigrants there. Although the conflicts do not lead us directly to the situation, they give us a brief idea that there is also an issue of immigration. However, the main cause of all of these conflicts are Eddie's jealousy over Rodolpho which causes Eddie's failure in making decisions. It is obvious that conflicts are the most

important element which leads us to see a clearer path to the main issue; uncontrolled jealousy may lead someone to make bad decisions and face his own destruction.

Statement of the Problem

The problems am I going to discuss are :

1. What kind of conflict happens in the drama?
2. What is the cause of the conflict?
3. What is the resolution to the conflict?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the above problems, the purpose of that study are :

1. To show the social conflicts in the drama.
2. To show the cause of each conflict.
3. To show the resolution of the conflict

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. I read the primary text, *A View from the Bridge* and then I search for some printed and online sources to support my discussion. In the end, I draw a conclusion from the whole discussion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the Analysis of Social Conflicts in *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. It is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of the Drama and the Biography of the Author.

