

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Throughout the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, thousands of Sicilians and Southern Italians migrated to the large cities of United States of America where they lived together in the neighborhood to search for a better life. The Italian conditions leading to emigration were over population, occasional famines and other economic disasters. In particular, certain revolutionary changes in agricultural and industrial technology uprooted farmers, peasants and artisans from their customary social order and led them to seek their fortunes in another country. Apart from the fact that they tried to earn a lot of money there, they also brought their Sicilian culture as the way of life, especially the Sicilian social code of honor.

Social honor refers to the esteem which is given to individuals by the society or groups, which decides the social position of individuals (*Encyclopedia of sociology*, 1992, p. 1234). The social honor is based on some value criteria which is accepted and agreed by all members of the society. The most important criteria of social honor is that all members of the society must obey the rules of society which is called as code of honor. The



code of honor depends on what kind of society we belong. It means what is honored by one group or society, may be viewed with indifference or even disapproval by another. Besides, each society has different culture including belief, law, folkways, mores, norms, and customs as the basic of the code of honor.

One of the characteristics of culture is that it comes down from the past, it is not created by anyone and continues beyond the individual lifespan. So, it is not so strange to observe that the Italian-Americans still employ their Sicilian code of honor strictly. One of the most important of the Sicilian code of honor is the conspiracy of silence which is usually called as "omerta" by Sicilians themselves. Sicilians always try to avoid the law of the state as far as they can as the law means unlucky for them. Furthermore, they have their own peculiar system of private justice, which is regulated by a complicated moral code. The obligation never, under any circumstances, apply for justice to the legal authorities and never assists in anyway in the detection of crimes committed against oneself or others (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1985, p.229). One of the characteristics of the Sicilians is that they have a strong feeling of family loyalty and of Sicilian brotherhood. If they know there is someone committing a crime, they would rather conceal it than report it, because it is something they must do to

gain the honorable rank from their society. So, the only thing they can do is just to obey it unconditionally. Otherwise, they will be ostracized and despised by their society, so they will lose their dignity as a member of the society.

The code of honor has a tight relationship with human dignity as they pursue honor to improve their dignity. According to Salvatore Maddi in his *Personality Theory*, dignity is an abstract and complex concept derived from Latin "dignus" : honorable quality, high reputation or honor or the degree of this, worthiness, a high position, rank or title, stately appearance or manner, or self-respect which exist in every personality with its unique shape and form. In Sicilian society, it is strictly about whether they obey the code of honor, in this case the conspiracy of silence, or they transgress it. In this lawful point of view, dignity is really measured for the faithfulness of the member of the society.

Thus, this study deals with the violation of the code of honor applied in Sicilian society, the reasons and the impact on the life of the actor and his dignity as a member of the society as portrayed in a play entitled *A View From The Bridge*. It was written by Arthur Miller, a famous American playwright who is well-known by his capability to combine social awareness with a searching concern for his character's inner conflicts as portrayed in

this play, through the violation of the code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence undergone by Eddie Carbone. It was published for the first time in 1955 and awarded The Gold Medal Award for Drama by The National Institute of Arts and Letters, eventhough it was not a successful play.

A View From The Bridge is set in Red Hook, the slum that faces the lay on the seawards of Brooklyn Bridge, New York City. It is the author's attempt at such tragedy motivated by a compound of jealousy and guilty. It describes the drama of longshoreman who lost his dignity as a member of the Sicilian society when he violates the code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence. Eddie Carbone, the hero of the play, is an Italian-American longshoreman who can never acknowledge his own passionate love to his own niece, Catherine, since he does not believe that he has had such a passion. Then, the situation is exacerbated by the arrival of two illegal immigrants to stay in their house. They are Marco and Rodolpho, the cousins of Eddie's wife. When the latter forms a relationship with Catherine, Eddie does his best to prevent it because he feels something in his heart he can barely understand. He insists that Rodolpho is just an irresponsible man who wants to marry Catherine only to obtain his American Citizenship. Now, anger, hopelessness, and jealousy drive Eddie to do something more irrational. Instead

of protecting his family's integrity, he even breaks it. Due to the thoughts that it is a part of his responsibility not to allow Catherine to be married by a humble man, he, then, violates the Sicilian code of honor, operative in his social world by betraying and reporting the brothers and unintentionally, the relatives of his family, to the Immigration Authorities. It means that Eddie breaks his own dignity in front of his society. Unfortunately, eventhough how strong his character is, he can not bear to face the effect of the violation to his lineage and his "name" in front of the society. Disgraced and stained now both in his house and in his society, he hazards a last defense of his dignity in the manhood ritual of the duel with Marco who accuses him as a traitor. Unfortunately, he is killed by his own hand.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Based on the background of the study above, it is interesting to analyze the violation of the code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence undergone by Eddie Carbone. The problems to be analyzed in this study are formulated into these following questions :

1. Why does Eddie Carbone eventually report Marco and Rodolpho to The Immigration Authorities, meaning that he violates the code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence ?

2. What is the impact of the violation on his life and his dignity in front of the neighborhood ?

C. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to find the answers for the proposed problems through the analysis. Thus, this study is intended :

1. To explore the reasons of why Eddie Carbone violates the Sicilian code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence.
2. To describe the effects of the violation of the code of honor toward his life and his dignity as a member of the Sicilian society.

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to depict, through the destruction of Eddie Carbone's life, a particular note of astonishment at the way in which a man will endanger his whole life by doing such a dangerous action. Furthermore, it also explains the psychological aspect of why a man acts as he does which is supported by sociological point of view.

The result of this study serves to enrich our knowledge about the life of man who can neither understand himself nor control his own feeling so that it causes him to do something which just destroy his own life. Moreover, it will hopefully be an input for other further studies

concerning with this work.

E. SCORE AND LIMITATION

The writer, in making this study, will only attempt to explore the main conflict in Eddie's mind which leads him to violate the code of honor by breaking the conspiracy of silence. This study is also emphasized on the analysis of the impact of the violation on Eddie's life. Therefore, the analysis will be focused on the analysis of the intrinsic elements of characters, the plot, and setting. The study will be based on psychological and sociological point of view.

F. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study is intended to analyze the inner conflict of the character which leads him to break the code of silence by reporting that there are two illegal immigrants in his neighborhood to the legal authorities and how he faces the effects of the violation toward his life. Since it deals with the structure of the play, the writer will apply structural theory. It tends to emphasize the study on the elements of the play giving the answer of the proposed problems in point B, through the character of Eddie Carbone, plot, and setting.

Because it deals with the conflict of a character, psychological approach supported by some psychological viewpoints will also be applied. It will also be supported by sociological approach since it deals with the

characteristics of The Sicilians society in general.

G. METHOD OF THE STUDY

In working on the thesis, the writer applies the library research to support the analysis of the problems. What is meant by library research here is a process to find information which is usefull to help the writer to direct her research. It serves for giving a brief picture of other writer's experiences in dealing and writing the paper . Thus, on the first stage, the writer collects information from books, articles, encyclopedias, and other printed materials related to the work of Arthur Miller, particularly of *A View From The Bridge*. The writer also tries to find information from any particular books dealing with the literary theoris and approaches that will be applied in the analysis. However, the main source of the study is the work itself, in this case Miller's *A View From The Bridge*, whereas the other sources are used for supported the study.

The method which will be used is descriptive analysis. It is applied to give descriptive explanation of the problems found in the work through the dialouge and action in the play. This method is applied based on the work itself and supported by other information concerning with this work. Furthermore, the quotations in the genuine form are provided to confirm and support the analysis

Finally, through this analysis, the writer hopes

to give a true understanding of the violation of the code of honor undergone by Eddie Carbone.

H. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

In this thesis, the important terms which are to be noted will be given as follow :

- (1). The code of honor = set of morals, rules or norms concerning with man's pride or dignity principles accepted by society
- (2). The conspiracy of silence = the principles applied in Sicilian society not to report any crimes by another member of the society to the legal authorities
- (3). Dignity = honorable rank or worthiness
- (4). Sicilian society = a group of people who migrates to America to live together in the neighborhood. All of them are Sicilians.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK