

# Historical Insights, Transition of Remittances and Hermeneutic Approaches from the perspective of Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*

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**Abstract:** *Nightingale bird entertains people with a melodious voice, on the other hand, a vigilant writer enlightens the heart of the readers by holding the flag of truth and unity. Arthur Miller in his writing A View from the Bridge indicated significant incidents of history and crucial issues of economy. This research piece will expose important incidents of history along with the roles and struggles of the immigrants in the transition process of remittance. The fact must be acknowledged that historical events and the struggle of past generations inspire active citizens to make a commitment to improve society.*

**Keywords:** history, economy, immigration, conflict, remittance

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## INTRODUCTION

Just after coming to a new land, immigrants suffer and struggle a lot (both physically and mentally) due to the social, economic and cultural gaps. Still now it is a topic of debate and discussion regarding their entrance into a new country. Nevertheless, history reveals the information that most of the cases are connected to either by war or by famine. It is not a choice but a necessity for them. *A View from the Bridge* is a fantastic example of reality where the desires and target goals of immigrants have been brought out in a magnificent way. Miller disclosed the points strongly in his writing with evidence that a balanced approach is essential in the immigration process for getting an effective result in the field of economy.

America is a land of freedom, justice and opportunities. So many immigrants are inclined to reach here for getting relief from the clutches of poverty. In *A View from the Bridge*, Marco and Rodolpho desired to come to America to get a free and fair life. They tried hard for a job in their home country Italy, but they did not find anything there because of the economic crisis and post war situation. Immigrants like Marco and Rodolpho are ready to take a precarious journey only to manage food for their family. However, the most crucial thing is that they don't get the chance to visit their family and country again. After World War II, so many immigrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean to reach America due to the severe economic condition in their home country. Even after being tired and tormented, they were courageous to take a voyage on the North Sea (Atlantic Ocean) to reach America. Without knowing what may happen to their life, whether they will be able to see the lovely motherland, whether they will be able to get the warm touches of their family, they dared to cross the sea for the sake of necessity and responsibility. Miller portrayed the image of the immigrants like Marco or Rodolpho who are inclined to kiss the challenging chapters of their life due to the promissory notes of their heart (that they kept to their family) for bringing economic feasibility. He revealed the critical situation through the voice of Marco in this way - "The older one is sick in his chest. My wife feeds them from her own mouth. I tell you the truth, if I stay there, they will never grow up. They eat the sunshine." (Act One, p.18). After World War II, Italians faced severe economic crisis, they had no job to work, no place to live, and the most painful thing- they had not the sufficient food to eat. Marco's wife was crestfallen with three little kids who were crying not for new clothes but for food. They spent the whole day eating sunshine, which means they did not find anything to eat for the entire day.

Miller depicted the scenario that despite strong feelings and anxieties, immigrants are compelled to relinquish their mind to say goodbye to their lovely family members because they believe one day everything will be fine, one-day life will give them the chance to meet their family again, one-day life will be settled. Eddie says- "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, I didn't stand around looking for relief- I hustled. When there were empty piers in Brooklyn I went to Hoboken, Staten Island, the West Side, Jersey, all over- because I made a promise... I walked hungry plenty days in this city!" (Act One, p. 37). Eddie struggled a lot to find a place to work in America. However, he was mentally strong, and that is why even after being sick, tired and hungry, he walked miles after miles. Even after hearing rejections, or viewing avoidance in numerous places, he was not broken rather he walked confidently to reach his target goal. With the voice of Eddie, Miller has exposed the condition of the immigrants who struggle deeply to buy food, let alone the issues of purchasing clothes or medicine (from the very beginning level of their arrival in a new and an expensive country like America). Wills says in *Destination America*- "Only for safety and a better life; four million refugees have come to America since World War II. America is a promised land to many because they believe that in this land their voice will not be silenced in any way." However, the painful truth is that only a few can fulfill the target goals of their life. During this relentless journey of struggle, many of them could not return

to their home country even for once due to the lack of proper documents and money. They had taken the taste of death painfully without meeting their family, without viewing the lovely faces of their children.

After World War II, a great number of Italians came to America by ship. Miller indicated the incident between the conversation of Eddie and his wife Beatrice. When Beatrice asked Eddie whether her cousins reached the port. Eddie says- "I was just knocking' off work before and Tony Bereli come over to me; he says the ship is in the North River." (Act One, p.5). Miller highlighted a motion regarding the people who crossed the North Sea (Atlantic Ocean) by ship during World War II to reach America. According to the report of "The Great Arrival: Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History"- by 1920, when immigration began to taper off, more than 4 million Italians had come to the United States and represented more than 10 percent of the nation's foreign-born population. During this time, they took their journey in transatlantic transportation. Here, passengers and cargo cross the Atlantic Ocean via shipping. As transatlantic transportation became more affordable, and as word of American prosperity came via returning immigrants and U.S. recruiters, Italians found it increasingly difficult to resist the call of "L'America". ("L'America" is the Italian translation of the word "America").

Arthur Miller portrayed the scenario of the transatlantic transportation where immigrants faced a long journey (fifteen to thirty days depending on situation and weather) to reach America. Just after reaching America, Rodolpho was crazy to find a suitable job. He felt dejected to see the maltreatment of society. However, his love relationship with Catherine (an American citizen) inspired him to live with a new hope. It is true that most of the immigrants are not valued with proper respect according to their expectations even after working hard and giving their best effort in the field of economy. Rodolpho felt an intense psychological pain when he found that immigrants are not treated equally with dignity due to the gap of class and culture. He raised his voice boldly- "I am not a beggar...You think we have no tall buildings in Italy? Electric Lights? No wide streets? No flags? No automobiles? Only work we don't have. I want to be an American so I can work, that is the only wonder here-work!" (Act Two, p. 49). He mentioned the points bravely that he is not a scrounger, rather he is a man with dignity. He has come to America not to sit idly as beggar but to earn money with labor and respect. His announcement regarding the flag, region and identity highlighted the point that they have their own region, sovereignty, sources, and potentialities. They should not be treated as beggars, slaves or rootless objects.

Immigrants like Marco and Rodolpho are inclined to stay in America even after facing different challenging situations because they believe everything will be fine one day, and they will get proper respect for their solid labor and sacrifice. World War II and the decades of internal conflicts left a legacy of violence, social chaos, and widespread poverty in Italy in a deep way. Regarding immigration and transition of labor force, the *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs: U.S. Relations with Italy* highlighted the note that- "The distinction between immigrants who came for

economic reasons and those who came to live in a free society is a blurry one...It is hard to comprehend what a big role the availability of cheap, or even free, land played in spurring immigration.” The fact cannot be denied that immigrants leave everything in their home country only with the hope of establishing a life newly in a land where freedom, equality, fraternity, humanity and justice are valued highly. They are ready to hug the relentless battle till the last breath of their life only to bring economic stability and to get the desired facilities. Rodolpho says to Beatrice- “Me? Yes, forever! Me, I want to be an American. And then I want to go back to Italy when I am rich.” (Act One, p.19).

Immigrants who came in America from Italy after the second world war participated both in the agricultural and industrial sector actively. Europeans are now scattered. Nevertheless, their cerebral desire is to accumulate economic power not only for the betterment of their family but also for their home country. Immigrants like Marco and Rodolpho are sending money as remittance to Italy from America not only to help their family but also to assist their home country economically. Wills revealed the portion in *Destination America* that “Italian emigration was fueled by dire poverty. Life in Southern Italy, including the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, offered hardship, exploitation, and violence. Between 1880 and 1924, more than four million Italians immigrated to the United States.” From the perspective of the 21st century, immigrants are now involved in different important sectors in the U.S. as for example, education, construction, agriculture, technology, law, artificial intelligence and health services. The fact cannot be denied that remittance plays a momentous role in the economy. It should be remembered that when remittances are used to purchase goods and services, the increased amount of consumption keeps a constructive impact on the aggregated demands and generates economic growth in a powerful way.

In *A View from the Bridge*, Miller highlighted the inclinations of Marco and Rodolpho where they are passionate not only about sending money to their home country but also spirited to save money for a better future. Significant points have been brought out regarding the connection of remittance with economy in the research piece “How remittances affect a country’s development”. The cogent notes of this piece are exposed in this way- “The economic effect of remittances increases the recipient's household income and creates an impact on the foreign exchange reserves of the recipient's country. Remittances contribute to output growth if invested and generate a positive multiplier effect if they are consumed.” Remittances assist with poverty alleviation, economic stability, and social services. The economic condition of Italy was not feasible due to the internal conflicts. However, collective steps were taken for bringing unification in Italy, but nothing worked well at that time. America never ruled Italy, but the United States did occupy Italy after World War II and helped Italy in the transition from a monarchy to a republic in 1946. Immigrants like Marco and Rodolpho had to leave their land due to the critical postwar situation. Miller exposed the scenario before the audience where so many people left their home country with hope but never got the chance to visit their country again. Marco says- “We have many families in our

town, the children never saw their father. But I will go home. Three, four years I think.” (Act One, p. 40). After hearing the notes of Marco, Beatrice is afraid that probably her cousin Marco will be caged in the mirage of expectations and layers of extreme pain. She knows that it is a path where so many may come, but only a few can return. So many may come, but only a few can return alive after reaching the target goals.

People, culture, language, environment all are totally new to the immigrants. However, immigrants like Marco tolerate extinguish pain and suffering all alone only to see the smiling faces of their family. Many of them are not capable of visiting their home country due to the scarcity of money or the lack of proper documents. However, they keep their feelings in a cage with intense pain. Painfully true, in this busy land where most of the native citizens are engrossed in a race with tight schedules don't get that much time to look at the immigrants who are stricken, let alone the issues of giving time in consolation or solving their problems. At the end of the day, they are bound to take their own pain, suffering and responsibility. Their loneliness and continuous tears with extreme mental pressures are echoed perpetually within four walls only. Beatrice says to Marco- “I just hope you ain't gonna do like some of them around here. They're here twenty-five years, some men, and they didn't get enough together to go back twice.” (Act One, pp. 39-40). The piteous point is that immigrants are regarded as machine and as a source of money both in their family and outside. In the chain of demand and supply, they feel tired, drained and exhausted, but they don't get the strength to stop everything due to the promissory note of their heart. Even after being sick, they don't think of returning to their home country as they play in the bid of life with the last drop of their blood. Cruel but true, many of them left the world without touching the lovely faces of their children, without feeling the warm touches of their family.

Do they think of returning to their own country? Certainly, they gravitate to return to their motherland each year, each month, each day and each breath but that dream never comes true due to the clash between expectation and reality. Miller displayed the view of the immigrants that they live with hope and trust the process by thinking today or tomorrow their situation will be changed. Rodolpho says- “Once I am a citizen I could work anywhere, and I would find better jobs.” (Act Two, p. 49). The fact cannot be denied that America is still the land of opportunity more than any other place. Most of the immigrant desire to come here as they believe their life will be free from exploitation in this country. Immigrants like Marco and Rodolpho are ready to sacrifice their life with firm dedication only after trusting the hope that one day their labor and effort will be justified. They believe that their assistance in family, and their benefaction in their home country with remittance will keep an efficacious impact in the economy and labor market by raising the reservation wages. Travaglini, an eminent researcher and an economist exposed a solid observation in “The US-Italy Economic Relation over the Last Decades” in this way- “Italy remains a key partner of the United States for its geopolitical and geoeconomic position...A revival of their international relations still represents both an opportunity and a strategic tool for addressing current geoeconomic challenges and fostering growth for both countries.” Because of the economical and

geological position, Italy receives a special treatment from the U.S, on the other hand, Italy considers the United States as prime for their great number of investments and roles as a partner in the largest non-EU market. Both countries are benefiting from the international market with their balanced relationship. However, the highlighting point is that transition of remittances by the immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy by increasing productivity and innovation, creating jobs, raising wages, and reducing inflation. Regarding the role of the immigrants in U.S. economy, Forward.us released important information with a statistical report at “Immigration Benefits All Americans and Strengthens the Economy” in this way- “Immigrants and immigration are good for America and Americans. It is vital that U.S. policymakers should work to preserve and enhance the benefits of immigration by building new legal avenues and increasing opportunities for newcomers to support themselves, participate in their local communities, and contribute to the United States’ success and prosperity.”

Miller foregrounded this point in a skillful way that immigrants keep an active role in the economy. However, they can also be responsible for doing unwanted things. A complex relationship between Eddie, Marco and Rodolpho has been exposed in the last act. Here, the jealous mindset of Eddie towards Rodolpho has been brought out. He is not eager to accept the love relationship and the marriage proposal of Catherine and Rodolpho (as he has a fervor for Catherine). He ratified his mind to take revenge whenever he found that Catherine had no respect or feeling for him, rather, she developed a deep love only for Rodolpho. Eddie was furious and vengeful with his calculative mind. He wanted to take revenge against Marco and his brother Rodolpho by banishing them from America. Eddie knew that due to the lack of money and proper documents, they would not be able to stay in the US. Just after thinking about the point, he called the law officers to deport them from America. When the law officers knocked on the door to arrest them, they were frightful with deep grief and anxieties not for their life but for their family. Marco remembered the lovely faces of his innocent children who were waiting to buy food after getting the money from him. He was tearful and aware of the fact that if he returned to his home country, his family would be in a suffocating situation again. He should have the mental strength to listen to the groan of his little kids. He must have the mental preparation to see the economic crisis and the death of his family members. Miller delineated the grave and painful psychological condition by the loud voice of Marco- “That One! He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children...He degraded my brother. My blood. He robbed my children; he mocks my work. I work to come here, mister!” (Act Two, pp. 64-66). He requested the officers repeatedly not to arrest him as he came here only to earn money and manage food for his children, nothing else. He kept the appeal before the officers constantly, but nothing worked. At that time, Alfieri, an Italian American lawyer came forward with a note that he would be able to bail Marco. However, he also exposed the point to Marco that hearing is just a formality. He must return to his own country. After hearing this note from him, Marco was exhausted. Nevertheless, he felt happy to know that his brother was relieved from the penalty (as he was about to marry an American citizen-Catherine). At the last scene, Alfieri assisted Marco to get bail. On the wedding day of Rodolpho and Catherine, Marco confronts Eddie with a

strong voice for his inappropriate behavior with Catherine and for being cruel towards her even after knowing her poignant condition. Their embroilment turned into physical fights very soon. Eddie uncovered a knife to stab Marco, but Marco grabbed his arm and turned the blade inward toward Eddie. After the death of Eddie, Alfieri raised his gleaming voice in this way- “Most of the time now we settle half, and I like it better. But the truth is holy, and even as I know how wrong he was, and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory- not himself purely...it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so, I mourn him- I admit it- with a certain...alarm.” (Act two, p. 72). Miller manifested the point in a sharp way that life is a mirage of colorful dreams and numerous expectations. Nevertheless, we must be satisfied with our own life. Eddie could spend a nice life with his wife Beatrice but his fervor for Catherine induced him to act out of anger and instigated him to take the taste of death in a painful way. Besides this, Miller also highlighted the psychological oscillation level of the immigrants like Marco who can do anything when they have no place to work. Miller disclosed a crucial view before the audience where Marco chose lifetime imprisonment of sufferings by killing Eddie. He did not return to his country because he could not accumulate the mental strength to face his family and little kids again in starvation. At the end, by using the term ‘a certain alarm’, Miller demonstrated the urgency of acting according to the demands of the time and situation.

Labor, economy, and remittance are all interconnected and crucial issues for a country. To bring progression, a balanced approach is necessary in the immigration process where the benefits and the set of skills (that an immigrant carries) will get priority. Time has come to think deeply about these issues not only for controlling criminal activities but also for ensuring a free and fair life for the next generation. The fact cannot be denied that still now a great number of native citizens are lethargic to give equal respect and opportunities to the immigrants due to their contingent mindset. To overcome the challenging situation, an egalitarian mentality should be entrenched with a genial vision for accelerating the wheels of the economy. Above all, the roles of the immigrants will be more efficacious if we value each other, and this willingness will start a journey to investigate the problems that exist in the immigration process along with a set of suggestions where the absolute guarantee of human dignity is paramount.

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