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## Longshoremen's Negotiation of Masculinity and the Middle Class in 1950s Popular Culture

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Longshoremen's Negotiation of Masculinity and the Middle Class in 1950s Popular Culture

by

Tomaro I. Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Humanities and Cultural Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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## **DEDICATION**

For my father

Not so long ago, I realized that both my father and I had spent the greater part of our working lives slinging boxes—he as a longshoreman and I as an archivist. As automation took over the loading docks, and changing job duties took over the library and archives fields, we both progressed from the day-to-day drudgery and repetition of moving box after box to different levels of the same type of work.

What most people do not realize about the “drudgery” is that there is a rhythm, a moving meditation, in the seeming monotony of lift, pick, place. There is a stillness between each action, a pause between each box, a quiet throughout each job. The lives of longshoremen and archivists are quite similar in that regard and also in their inevitable solitude as they work among others but alone. Driven by completion of the task at hand, by measurements of volume and feet, they pack things into tight spaces—boxes and boats—they pack things internally to drown out the silence.

This thesis is a labor of love. Love for my father, love for our respective professions, love for the many workers who toil by hand to ensure that both real and frivolous needs are met. But, this thesis is also to acknowledge the work of the laborer. The men and women whose hands are bloodied, whose backs are bent, and whose spirits are broken by jobs with unforeseeable ends, except to finish one task and move on to the next. They are the unseen and the unheard, whose lives are packed away tightly in both big and small spaces as we, the consumers, use the fruits of

their labor without second thought. They are the farmers and farm workers, the assembly men and women, the underpaid and overworked. They are the longshoremen. This is for them. This is for you.

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With utmost gratitude, I thank the wonderfully amazing family that has persevered alongside me through the good, the bad, and the beautiful of this process: my father, Mr. Bennie B. Taylor, who worked hard so that we would not have to, and who serves as the inspiration for my research into this area; my mother, Mrs. Dorothy S. Taylor, who has always been my academic cheerleader, dictionary, thesaurus, and ears from the first through final drafts of anything; my husband, Mr. Christopher Vela, who showers me with love and praise and indulges my seemingly endless educational journeys, be they academic or otherwise; and my sister Sabrina and my grandparents, who are always here with me even when they are not.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis considers mid-20<sup>th</sup> century portrayals of working-class longshoremen's masculinity within the context of emerging middle-class gender constructions. I argue that although popular culture presents a roughly standardized depiction of longshoremen as "manly men," these portrayals are significantly nuanced to demonstrate the difficulties working-class men faced as they attempted to navigate socio-cultural and socio-economic shifts related to class and the performance of their male gender. Specifically, I consider depictions of longshoremen's disruptive masculinity, male identity formation, and masculine-male growth as reactions to paradigmatic shifts in American masculinity. Using three aspects of longshoremen's non-work lives presented in *A View from the Bridge*, "Edge of the City," and "On the Waterfront"—the house, the home, and leisure/recreational activity—I ground discussions of the longshoremen's negotiation of masculinity within a conceptual framework based in masculinity studies, social construction, and psychoanalytic criticism. To both complement and supplement the core literary and cultural analyses presented in this text, oral history interviews have been included to provide a contextual basis for understanding longshoremen culture in the 1950s.

## INTRODUCTION

Longshoremen comprise one of the most significant, yet often most unrecognized, facets of American life. As manual laborers, they endure the harsh working conditions of the waterfront environment to ensure the expeditious transport of everyday commodities that most people take for granted. In many ways, their work impacts everything and everyone around them, but it is often disregarded in the ways that other working-class and blue-collar jobs are. As such, society's ability to "forget" the far reach of longshoremen helps perpetuate the stereotypes embedded in America's cultural memory—that of the hardworking, hard-living, tough talking, hypermasculine men of stunted educational, emotional, and cultural intelligence who primarily exist in the movies of years past.

My father is one of the men burdened by the persistent stereotypes of working-class longshoremen. He retired in 2002, after spending more than 50 years as a dockworker. To this day, he still considers himself a longshoreman, and he continues to maintain active involvement in union activities. It is difficult for him and others to think of him in any other way, and I, too, have difficulty separating my father from his life's work.

As the child of a longshoreman, my father's work most often meant absence. Days, nights, and weekends were strongly influenced by his schedule or the seeming lack thereof. While other parents bookended their children's schooldays with their pre-sunrise and post-sunset presences, my father was an enigma who seemed to appear and disappear without warning. Breakfasts were eaten alone on days my father's work started before dawn; dinners were planned



in accordance with his supper breaks; and birthday cakes sometimes sat uneaten for long stretches of time in anticipation of his arrival. With his absence, however, came feelings of awe and admiration. His decidedly working-class job afforded private schools, college tuitions, houses, properties, cars, vacations, and financial assistance for our household and others. From the insider's perspective we were (and are) definitively middle class, but the outsider's perspective falls somewhere in between.

This is the conundrum of longshoremen. In many ways, their socio-cultural positions are pre-determined by their blue-collar status regardless of their ability or desire to move beyond the markers of their perceived socio-economic standing. This sentiment pervades both historical and popular texts centered on this group of working-class men. An extensive review of the literature<sup>1</sup> reveals that most texts focused on longshoremen typically fall within one of two categories of publication: documentary studies or sociological studies. Of these, documentary works related to labor history, union activity, and union activism comprise a significant portion of the literature. Most texts do not provide a holistic view of longshore work nor do they consider the non-work lives of longshoremen.

My familiarity with the work and non-work lives of longshoremen serves as the impetus for this inquiry, which is centered on the representation of longshoremen in post-World War II

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles B. Barnes, *The Longshoremen* (New York: Arno Press, 1915); Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974); William DiFazio, *Longshoremen: Community and Resistance on the Brooklyn Waterfront* (South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey, 1985); Howard Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Gilbert Mers, *Working the Waterfront: The Ups and Downs of a Rebel Longshoreman* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988); Bracey Meier Rudwick, *Black Workers and Organized Labor* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971); Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Calvin Winslow, *Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Pilar Angela Wright, "Solidarity Forever! The Lives of Retired Longshoremen" (master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1999); plus a number of articles published in scholarly research journals and trade magazines.

American popular culture. Specifically, I consider portrayals of working-class longshoremen in selected texts as a reaction to paradigmatic changes in American socio-economic culture during the 1950s. To do this, I look at three aspects of longshoremen's non-work lives that are presented in film and literature: residential quarters ("the house"), sense of place ("the home"), and leisure/recreational activities. These aspects are considered within the context of longshoremen's identities, particularly as they relate to the performance or rejection of masculine manhood. At the core of my research are the ways in which longshoremen negotiate masculinity within the emerging framework of middle-class ideology, which engendered significant changes to many of the expectations surrounding men's domestic and social roles. I argue that although popular culture presents a roughly standardized depiction of longshoremen as "manly men," these portrayals are significantly nuanced to demonstrate the difficulties working-class men faced as they attempted to navigate socio-cultural and socio-economic shifts related to class and the performance of male gender. However, longshoremen were consistently portrayed in the popular media of this era within the context of their more masculine, more traditional line of work as a way to depict the working class' seemingly limited ability to transcend the middle-class boundaries that emerged during this period. As such, longshoremen characters serve as the most appropriate symbol for this discussion of manhood and the negotiation of class boundaries because their success as working-class men depends on one of the most obvious markers of masculinity—physical strength.

Throughout *A View from the Bridge*, "Edge of the City," and "On the Waterfront," longshoremen characters demonstrate that their reliance on masculine strength is not only a means of conducting manual labor but also a way to manage the emotional conflicts associated with working-class lifestyles during this period. Depicted in the ways the characters navigate

their homes,<sup>2</sup> relationships,<sup>3</sup> and interpersonal discord,<sup>4</sup> physicality factors prominently in longshoremen's manly portrayals. This aspect of their depictions also suggests the trouble longshoremen have separating their work and non-work lives, thus problematizing their efforts to achieve the middle-class "dream." Because strength casts a pall at and away from the workplace, and because their occupations and class status serve as the longshoremen's primary social identifiers, the influence of middle-class ideology is somewhat limited by their ability to successfully navigate masculine affect. This is seen not only in the characters' efforts to maintain a livelihood as longshoremen but in their struggles to maintain work,<sup>5</sup> respect,<sup>6</sup> and justice<sup>7</sup> on the waterfront docks. Ultimately, it is also seen in their physical and emotional deaths, whether on the job or among other members of their workforce.

For this project, literary, cultural, and oral history analyses combine to provide a lens into the ways working-class longshoremen in popular culture negotiated masculinity in response to changing socio-cultural mores. I use a framework primarily based in social construction, masculinity studies, and class studies to demonstrate that longshoremen's masculine expressions facilitate their ability to resolve both tangible and intangible conflicts that center on particular aspects of middle-class life. Specifically, I use this framework to discuss the intersection of

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<sup>2</sup> Consider the breadwinner model depicted in "Edge of the City," and the boxing motifs in "On the Waterfront."

<sup>3</sup> Note Eddie Carbone's physical dominance over Catherine and Rodolpho in "A View from the Bridge," as discussed in Chapter Two: "'I Want My Name!': Hypermasculinity and Death of the Ego as Responses to Change in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*."

<sup>4</sup> As a theme, personal conflict comes to the fore as psychological tension. Interpersonal conflict is depicted throughout and is often managed through physical fights. Refer to the various fight scenes scattered throughout the texts.

<sup>5</sup> Recall the final scenes of "On the Waterfront," in which Terry Malloy fights for his right to work.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Eddie Carbone's insistence that Marco give him his name back in *A View from the Bridge*.

<sup>7</sup> This is portrayed in two fight scenes depicted in "Edge of the City." In the first, Tommy Tyler fights Charlie Malick to "protect" Axel Nordmann/North. In the final, Axel fights Charlie as an act of justice to avenge Tommy's death.

masculinity, middle-class ideology, and psychological tension as related to longshoremen's negotiation of their domestic and social spheres.

This project is informed by three popular culture texts produced in the United States during the 1950s and three oral history interviews conducted in the mid-late 2010s: a play, *A View from the Bridge* (1956); two films, *On the Waterfront* (1954) and *Edge of the City* (1957); and interviews conducted with my father, retired longshoreman Mr. Bennie B. Taylor (2013, 2014, 2016). Each text is treated separately to highlight specific patterns of masculine negotiation, ranging from the stunted emotionality portrayed in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* to the façade of overcoming class status in Martin Ritt's "Edge of the City."

In the first chapter, I provide an overview of both the concepts and theoretical frameworks used as the foundation for subsequent chapters. I ground specific notions of middle-class life (house, home, leisure, and recreation) within the overarching realm of masculinity studies and the social construction of identity.

Chapters two, three, and four are close readings of *A View from the Bridge*, "Edge of the City" and "On the Waterfront," respectively. Using the concepts and theories presented in chapter one, I discuss how the longshoreman character's masculine portrayals signify his (in)ability to negotiate specific class boundaries.

Chapter five consists of excerpts of interviews conducted with my father, Mr. Bennie B. Taylor. This content is included to provide a contextual basis for understanding longshoremen culture in the 1950s.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### A Conceptual Framework for Longshoremen's Negotiation of Identity and Class

Longshoremen comprise one of the many, unrecognized components of industry and trade that ensures the productive import and export of consumer goods. Whether referred to as dockworkers or stevedores, and whether working as scabs, union, or company men, their basic role remains the same—to be “employed along the shore”<sup>1</sup> as manual laborers loading and unloading both cargo and passenger ships. This common thread weaves together both real and fictitious longshoremen, but where the thread frays is in depictions of longshoremen's non-work activities. Ethnographies, oral histories, and case studies tend to focus on the varied aspects of the real longshoremen's employment<sup>2</sup>—the day-do-day activities centering on at-work duties; film and literature tend to depict fictitious longshoremen's non-work lives with nearly as much frequency as their lives on the job. In both cases, life away from the job is usually presented within the context of labor, and the men are portrayed as having great difficulty distancing themselves from their work environments. Because both real and imagined longshoremen are often depicted as being limited in their ability to separate from their hardened working-class roles, it is important to consider their lives holistically in order to understand their negotiation of identity within the changing dynamics of mid-century class structures. This chapter provides a

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “longshoreman, n.” Accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/view/Entry/110070?redirectedFrom=longshoreman>

<sup>2</sup> Selected works include: Barnes, 1915; Eric Hoffer, *Working and Thinking on the Waterfront; A Journal, June 1958-May 1959* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Kimeldorf, 1988; Mers, 1988; Maud Russell, *Men along the Shore* (New York: Brussel and Brussel, 1966); Schwartz, 2009; and Wright, 1999.

conceptual framework for analyses presented in chapters 2-5 by grounding considerations of house, home, leisure, and recreation within a theoretical approach centered on the construction of social class and identity, the performance of masculinity, and the underlying currents of social condition and psychological tension that emerged in the 1950s. Residential settings, a sense of “home,” and leisure serve as the main focal points of these analyses because of their inherent connection to the emerging class dynamics of this particular era.

### **Longshoremen**

My father once said, “All stevedores are longshoremen, but not all longshoremen are stevedores.”<sup>1</sup> For simplicity’s sake, the terms “longshoreman” and “longshoremen” are used to describe all workers engaged in the loading and unloading of marine-based cargo shipments that enter and leave a city’s port. Because the popular culture materials examined do not differentiate between longshoremen, dockworkers, stevedores, scabs, or other laborers along the waterfront, I have collapsed these occupational identifiers to minimize any confusion that might arise from these distinctions.

The decision to collapse the various names and titles used to describe longshore workers served as the catalyst for also collapsing discussions of race, geography, politics, and gender.<sup>2</sup> While it seems natural to consider both the relevance and impact of these themes on the real and fictitious longshoremen’s negotiation of identity and class, I find it necessary to deemphasize their importance for three reasons:

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<sup>1</sup> The stevedore’s job differs in his supervisory capacity and the level of responsibility demanded, not as a result of basic job duties (Bennie B. Taylor [retired longshoreman], interview by Tomaro I. Taylor, 2013, transcript).

<sup>2</sup> As this project focuses on a profession historically segregated by sex and gender, the roles of female longshoremen are not considered. Hence, the longshore profession and its triangulation with masculine performance and middle-class ideology is viewed only through the masculine-male perspective.

- (1) Longshoremen often lived and worked among other longshoremen (or other workers of the same economic class) as a result of their reduced social standing;<sup>3</sup>
- (2) Even though the nature of dock work has made it possible for almost anyone to be hired for a day's wage, the job has almost exclusively been conducted by men from lower socio-economic classes—the undereducated, the under-employable, ethnic minorities, and ethnic whites from immigrant backgrounds;
- (3) The preceding points make separating these specific markers of socio-cultural being untenable.

### *Race and Geography*

With a project that begins and ends during a period of rising racial tensions, it seems irresponsible to eliminate discussions of race, particularly when the cultural artifacts selected for analysis can be categorized cursorily by ethnic background. As such, it is necessary to eliminate these discussions by addressing the *perceived notion of race*—that is, the social construction of race. Social constructionism posits that many of the general concepts related to identity are formulated on the basis of an individual's experience with and interpretation of “objective and subjective reality.”<sup>4</sup> As a construct—an end product of conditions, ideologies, perceptions, and expectations woven into the fabric of society—race cannot be considered a stable marker of identity. By moving beyond this common identifier to, instead, look more closely at other symbols of personhood, discussions of corresponding aspects of the longshoremen community are also eliminated, such as geography. Like race, geography can be a primary factor in

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<sup>3</sup> DiFazio; Elizabeth Ogg, *Longshoremen and their Homes: The Story of a Housing “Case” Study Conducted under the Auspices of the Greenwich House* (New York, NY: Greenwich House, 1939).

<sup>4</sup> Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and *Social Constructionism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (New York: Routledge, 1995). See also: Richard A. Shweder and Joan G. Miller, “The Social Construction of the Person: How is it Possible?” in *The Social Construction of the Person*, eds. Kenneth J. Gergen and Keith E. Davis (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1985), 40.; and “Chapter 15: Social Construction,” in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*, ed. William F. Eadie (Sage Publications, 2009), 128-136.

dockworker demographics; by removing geographic location from the longshoremen's identity, it is possible to consider members of this community as a sample cross-section of the nineteen-fifties American male, working-class labor force. It also becomes possible to focus on longshoremen as *men* with minimal consideration of how racial identity and location factor into their negotiation of masculinity and middle-class ideology.

### *Politics*

When discussing the history of labor and politics in mid-century America, what often comes to the fore is the intersection of American Communist Party<sup>5</sup> ideology and working class ethics. A review of the literature suggests that during the 1950s, membership in the CPUSA had dwindled, and its effect—particularly on the working class—was minimal.<sup>6</sup> In Robert H. Zieger and Gilbert J. Gall's *American Workers, American Unions: The Twentieth Century*, the authors claim that workers' responses to class-based "political appeals" were significantly reduced during the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Increasing anti-Communist sentiment among American laborers marked a shift toward "ongoing commitment to democratic radicalism,"<sup>8</sup> most notably acknowledged in the decreasing number of registered CPUSA members between 1956 and 1958.<sup>9</sup> Other historians make similar claims, suggesting a correlation between increased union activism and decreased political activity among working-class groups during this period.<sup>10</sup> When coupled with

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<sup>5</sup> The American Communist Party is also referred to as Communist Party USA and CPUSA.

<sup>6</sup> See: K.A. Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," *The Journal of American History* (September 2000): 515-545; Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 2002); and Robert H. Zieger and Gilbert J. Gall, *American Workers, American Unions: The Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Zieger and Gall, 162.

<sup>8</sup> According to Zieger and Gall, more than three-quarters of formerly registered CPUSA members dropped their membership within the short span of two years, 179. For additional discussion, see Alan Keenan, "The Beautiful Enigma of Radical Democracy," *Theory and Event* 1.3 (1997), Accessed October 20, 2016, *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/tae.1997.0016.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>10</sup> David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1969); Thomas Geoghegan, *Which Side Are You On? Trying to be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1991).



enactment of the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947,<sup>11</sup> it is possible to suggest that the presumed union of both Communist politics and the longshoremen community's negotiation of the cultural economy was most greatly realized during the 1940s, with limited carryover into the following decade.

### **Working-Class Bodies and Male Masculinity**

Working-class bodies are often portrayed within a framework of stereotypes specifically attributed to members of this particular social group.<sup>12</sup> For longshoremen, these stereotypes are most readily observed as performances of one, identifying trait and its utility in and outside of the work environment: masculine strength.<sup>13</sup> In film and literature, masculine strength serves as a marker of the longshoremen's physical and emotional states—the end product of bodies and minds hardened by tough working and living conditions. As the most overt symbol of their livelihood, masculine strength facilitates the persistent tropes that these literal and figurative strong men of American culture are emotionally detached,<sup>14</sup> lacking in cultural fluidity,<sup>15</sup> and unable or unwilling to fully integrate into non-working class cultures.<sup>16</sup> As such, it is necessary to consider the changing tide of male masculinity in the fifties to better understand the role of manhood and its impact on working-class men's roles in American society.

Post-World War II, the inherent value of “masculine” characteristics changed, signaling the beginning of a paradigm shift in America. Steadfast examples of overtly masculine men, such

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<sup>11</sup> More commonly referred to as Taft-Hartley, the Labor Management Relations Act was enacted to restrict the power of labor unions.

<sup>12</sup> See Laura Hapke, *Labor's Text: The Worker in American Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001) for treatment of this subject.

<sup>13</sup> See the following for depictions of longshoremen in American film, 1900-2014: “Waterfront” (1939); “The Mob” (1951); “On the Waterfront” (1954); “Edge of the City” (1957); “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue” (1957); “Money for Nothing” (1993); and “White Irish Drinkers” (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Consider Marlon Brando's portrayal of “Terry Malloy” in *On the Waterfront* and Stephen Lang's character “Patrick Leary” in *White Irish Drinkers*.

<sup>15</sup> Consider the character “Eddie Carbone” in *A View from the Bridge*.

<sup>16</sup> Consider Sidney Poitier's character Tommy Tyler in *Edge of the City*.

as portrayed in the periods leading up to the war, were being replaced by depictions of “men in crisis”<sup>17</sup>—male figures caught in the web of anxiety complicated by changing gender roles and social expectations. Textual and visual treatments of men’s changing positionality often excluded members of the working class,<sup>18</sup> and thus depictions of “manly men” were strongest in popular culture texts where the stereotypically masculine male was most prominent—“Western” films,<sup>19</sup> which featured strong, adventurous, gun-toting cowboys and ranch hands, and blue-collar dramas<sup>20</sup> depicting tough, unsophisticated, and undereducated ethnic workers. One of the main differences between the two treatments of masculinity was the rugged heroism of the cowboy character. Whereas both character types tended to depict a fight greater than themselves, the staunch individualism of masculine-male characters in western genres strongly contrasts with the collective mindset of the working-class male, particularly as seen among longshoremen characters. Male figures held prominence on and off screen, but, increasingly, the male body’s masculine performance was depicted against the backdrop of transient social stratifications. The expectations of middle-class conformity, broader acceptance of a more domesticated male figure, the progressive move away from the male body as the sole force of American productivity, and a resulting detachment from overt depictions of masculinity in popular media served as the catalyst for a shift away from the predominant heteronormative scheme.<sup>21</sup> However, this imbalance

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<sup>17</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>18</sup> See Sloan Wilson’s *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (London: The Reprint Society, 1957) for further discussion.

<sup>19</sup> A slew of films starring Gene Autry, Audie Murphy, Roy Rogers, John Wayne, and countless others were produced during the 1950s.

<sup>20</sup> *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Elia Kazan (1951; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Videos, 2006), DVD; *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman (1954; Oak Forest, IL: MPI Home Video, 1987), VHS; *Marty*, directed by Harold Hecht (1955; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001), DVD.

<sup>21</sup> See James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

persisted in depictions of blue-collar workers—particularly those centered on jobs of labor, such as the longshore industry—which continued to segregate workers along male-female lines.<sup>22</sup>

Twentieth-century studies on male masculinity discuss the evolution of men's roles within the context of changing social strata. Within these dynamics, some researchers suggest that a contextual reframing of manhood and manliness, particularly as considered during the nineteen-fifties, places masculinity within the parameters of a socially constructed identity. In *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*, James Gilbert suggests that masculinity stems from a complex network of beliefs and actions influenced by interactions with the socio-cultural environment.<sup>23</sup> He further states:

Added to the complication of generalizations is the problem of defining masculinity during the 1950s in the larger context of variations in social class, race, and ethnicity. The conversation about masculinity in this period was often narrowly focused. Observers at the time (and subsequently) generally paid scant attention to class racial and ethnic differences, and they defined the problem largely in terms of middle-class habits and possibilities. This exclusivity has allowed for a certain centering of attention and, sometimes, by implication, it has suggested that the excluded men (working class or black) commanded a more enviable masculinity. But, for the historian, this concentration has at least the virtue of consistency, for the mainstream conversation about masculinity throughout the first half of the twentieth century has regularly focused on white, middle-class men and their gender identity problems and scarcely on anyone else.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> According to Mr. Taylor, a few women have conducted the same level and type of work as at Port Tampa as the male longshoremen, but, during the 1950s, the women primarily worked the banana repack table, where they would separate the bananas and repackage them for shipping (Taylor, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert, 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

Additional studies of 20<sup>th</sup> century manliness reference the dichotomous relationship of masculinity and femininity with nearly as much frequency as the impact of America's changing socio-economic values on men's projection of manhood.<sup>25</sup> The continued "feminization" of both home and work spaces induced tension among America's male population as attempts were made to reconcile familial roles, workplace expectations, and self-satisfaction. As such, men's identity suffered but mostly in the ability to express traditional notions of masculinity. Whereas masculinity had once been performed in ways that men "had better make sure to always be walking around and acting 'real masculine',"<sup>26</sup> such overt displays were decreasingly acceptable in an increasingly middle-class society. Society's once "relentless and self-conscious preoccupation with masculinity"<sup>27</sup> was being reframed to account for evolving male and female gender roles.

Little of the aforementioned "reframing" evolved in consideration of working-class men. As such, working-class men could not escape the confines of traditional male masculinity. In *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, Barbara Ehrenreich suggests that the need for working-class males to exhibit excessively masculinized characteristics was, in many ways, demonstrative of their inability to express other personality traits and emotions.<sup>28</sup> She further states that in the 1950s, masculinity hinged on maturity—a new determinant of a man's manliness. As men's roles evolved, maturity stood as a testament of their social progress and manifested within Americans' increased social focus on leisure, domesticity, responsibility, and economic mobility as fostered by the middle-class ideal.<sup>29</sup> Ehrenreich further

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<sup>25</sup> See Gilbert, Connell, and Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Kimmel, 69.

<sup>27</sup> Gilbert, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-28.

suggests that overt displays of male-gendered hypermasculinity, the character trait most often projected of longshoremen, was symptomatic of an apparent *lack* of maturity. This immature status was subsequently negotiated through “the subversive masculinity of the blue-collar, or lumpen male”<sup>30</sup> who was considered “the last repository of defiant masculinity.”<sup>31</sup> As a more puerile form of male being, working-class masculinity signaled an inability to accept or adhere to burgeoning middle-class ideologies of manhood. Thus, the working-class male’s static social and economic positions were a result of his inability to embrace emotional growth.

### **Middle-Class Aesthetics**

In many ways, middle-class conformity tempered mid-century anxiety; but with conformity arose additional social ills. The emerging middle class brought increasingly tangible markers of economic identity, thus making clearer the lines of division between the “haves” and “have nots.” The trappings of suburban life—single-family homes, mass-produced consumer goods,<sup>32</sup> and increased participation in leisure activities<sup>33</sup>—made obvious the growing divide between socio-economic classes, and men’s ability to navigate this changing cultural sphere depended as much on their professional capacity as their psychological one.

### *Of House and Home*

When considering house and home, I suggest that the ways in which longshoremen interact with their residential quarters serves as the outward representation of their psychological conflict, particularly as these struggles relate to their difficulty navigating middle-class notions of the masculine-male ideal. Whereas the house, as physical structure, represents longshoremen’s

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Between 1850 and 1956, the average number of hours comprising the American work week decreased by nearly 60% from 70 hours to 40.5 hours. (Sean Sayers, “Lived Time, Leisure, and Retirement,” in *The Philosophy of Leisure*, eds. Tom Winnifrith and Cyril Barrett [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989], 46).

lives outside of work, the “home” is typically internalized to aid in the negotiation of masculine manhood. In subsequent chapters, I demonstrate that longshoremen’s overt masculinity is a shield against the hardened working conditions of longshore life and that their relationship with both house and home aids in displacing the tensions experienced in both the work environment and the conflicting atmosphere of middle-class expectations. The physicality of the residential space and the psychological affect of home allow longshoremen to effect some semblance of balance between the external and internal tensions of their masculine-male performances as engendered by their occupational and class statuses. Further, I suggest that “home” is not a physical space but, rather, an extension of one’s personal identity; longshoremen characters are most vulnerable in this home space and are most capable of connecting with themselves outside of their masculine-male projections. Within the home, there is a level of introspection exhibited by some characters that indicates their homes are, figuratively speaking, where their hearts reside. For certain longshoremen characters, this suggests they are only at home when they are themselves and not the projections of their working-class identities.

### *The House*

Nineteen-fifties American home life often centered on detached, single-family, suburban homes built to accommodate the burgeoning socio-cultural lifestyles of “typical” families in the United States. Designed as havens from work, points of familial interactivity, and spaces for leisure and communalism, images of idealized, middle-class homes saturate 1950s popular media. The post-war domestic bliss of conspicuous consumption was real, and as Kenneth T. Jackson states in *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*: “The single-family dwelling became the paragon of middle-class housing, the most visible symbol of having arrived at a fixed place in society, the goal to which every decent family aspired. It was an

investment that many people hoped would provide a ticket to higher status and wealth.”<sup>34</sup> But in the nineteen-fifties, purchases of real property were not strictly determined by social status. In “Working-Class Home Ownership in the American Metropolis,” Richard Harris references a marked increase in homeownership, with individual homebuyers opting for single-family homes.<sup>35</sup> During this same period, the U.S. Census Bureau reports an extraordinary “post-World War II surge in homeownership... A booming economy, favorable tax laws, a rejuvenated home building industry, and easier financing [that] saw homeownership explode nationally,” increasing nearly 10% from 1940 to 1950 and jumping to roughly 62% by 1960.<sup>36</sup> As the post-War economy improved and many Americans experienced greater financial gains, the demand for housing grew.<sup>37</sup> As such it is reasonable to suggest that members of the working class were just as likely to benefit from the post-war housing boom as other classes of workers.

Unfortunately, the limited depictions of working-class domesticity remained fairly static in popular media regardless of real-life trends. Fifties film and literature rejects the notion of real property ownership among members of the working class, and particularly among longshoremen. As with other blue-collar workers,<sup>38</sup> longshoremen characters are typically depicted as apartment dwellers who live in multi-story buildings or, seemingly, nowhere at all. There is also little to suggest that their residential spaces are not rented; images of attached homes in poor to moderate neighborhoods predominate. Additionally, while it would seem that financial limitations would

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<sup>34</sup> Jackson, 50.

<sup>35</sup>Richard Harris, “Working-Class Home Ownership in the American Metropolis,” *Journal of Urban History* 17.1 (1990), 50.

<sup>36</sup> U. S. Census Bureau, “Census of Housing: Historical Census of Housing Tables: Homeownership,” Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/owner.html>.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Census of Housing: 1950: Volume I: General Characteristics, Part 1: United States Summary,” Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.census.gov/housing/census/data/ownerchar.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Clear examples of working-class home life include: *The Honeymooners* (Television series, 1955-1956, CBS); *Life of Riley* (Television series, 1953-1958, NBC); *Hey, Jeannie!* (aka *The Jeannie Carson Show*, Television series, 1957, CBS); and the aforementioned *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

place longshoremen within close proximity of their workplaces for easier travel to and from the job site, this is also not the case; it is often difficult to determine whether longshoremen characters' residences are located near or adjacent to their work environments.<sup>39</sup>

I surmise that depictions of longshoremen's domestic lives suggest the characters' relative inability to disengage from the urban environments most commonly associated with city-dwelling, working-class families. By eliminating the visual cues typically associated with suburban life—such as residential communities, lawns, and personal transportation—it becomes difficult for audiences to consider these characters situated within other lifestyles. On the rare occasion that these cues do appear, they serve as conflicts of the characters' positionality within their occupational and domestic roles. And, while it is worth considering that longshoremen's residential spaces and domestic lifestyles are depicted to create a sense of balance between their work and non-work lives, I suggest that they serve as the outward representations of their psychological conflict as working-class, masculine-male figures in an increasingly middle-class world.

### *The Home*

Dolores Hayden states, “The house is an image of the body, of the household, and of the household's relation to society, it is a physical space designated to mediate between nature and culture, between the landscape and the large urban built environment.”<sup>40</sup> The house is a domestic space that outwardly projects the presumed socio-cultural and socio-economic statuses of its inhabitants. But, what of the home? Hayden suggests that in considering home, one must

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<sup>39</sup> It is commonly assumed that longshoremen live within close proximity of their work environments. In Mr. Taylor's experience, longshoremen affiliated with Tampa's ILA Local #1402 sometimes lived up to 40 miles away from the union hall (Bennie B. Taylor [retired longshoreman], interview by Tomaro I. Taylor, July 27, 2014, transcript).

<sup>40</sup> Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 40.



“[rethink] the spatial, technological, cultural, social and economic dimensions of sheltering, nurturing, and feeding society, activities often discussed as if they had existed unchanged from the beginning of time, unsmirched by capitalist development, technological manipulation, or social pressures.”<sup>41</sup> Whereas the house and its surroundings provide an external projection of its inhabitants, the home—as a non-physical construction—reflects internal aspects of an individual: a sense of place, a sense of belonging, and connectivity to self and others.

Though vague, sense of place encompasses the feelings that people experience in relation to particular settings or situations. Gerard Kyle and Garry Chick refer to this concept within the framework of “symbolic interactionism,”<sup>42</sup> or an individual’s relationship with an object as derived from the significance placed on said entity. Typically, these affiliations are discussed within the context of geographies, but they also can be considered within the context of other subconscious acts that develop from personal affiliations, biases, and experiences.<sup>43</sup> As such, it is reasonable to suggest the concept of “home” as an extension of one’s identity when considering depictions of longshoremen in popular culture. “Place,” according to Robert Bruce Hay, “is merely the locus where... lives ‘take place.’”<sup>44</sup>

When house and home are separated, it is possible to unpack the emotional and psychological ties often associated with “home”<sup>45</sup> and consider the home’s relationship to the self. Shelley Mallett proposes, “most authors uncritically conflate house and home,”<sup>46</sup> merging the two rather distinct concepts into one, generic ideal and thereby reducing the meaning of

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>42</sup> Gerard Kyle & Garry Chick, “The Social Construction of a Sense of Place,” *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 29.3 (2007), 210. See also: Melinda J. Milligan, “Interactional Past and Potential: The Social Construction of Place Attachment,” *Symbolic Interaction* 21:1 (May 1998), 1-33.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Bruce Hay, “Toward a Theory of Sense of Place,” *Trumpeter* 5:4 (Fall 1988), 160.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>45</sup> Shelley Mallett, “Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature,” *The Sociological Review* (2004): 84.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

home into collapsed discussions of shelters and “socio-spatial systems.”<sup>47</sup> Mallett’s review of the literature identifies the varied relationships between home and the self, concluding, “Home can be an expression of one’s (possibly fluid) identity and sense of self and/or one’s body might be home to the self.”

### *Leisure and Recreational Activity*

With one exception, leisure and recreational activity do not factor into depictions of longshoremen’s non-work lives as often as houses and homes. Although longshoremen characters actively engage in non-work activities, whether their actions are considered leisurely lies in one’s interpretation of these terms as well as the intentions placed on each character. I suggest that longshoremen’s leisure and recreational activities are presented in the attempt to better align identities that do not fit within working-class social conventions of the nineteen-fifties masculine-male frame. When engaged in leisure and recreation, longshoremen characters portray one of two ideals: they successfully negotiate their masculinity within the emerging middle-class frame, or they reject middle-class aesthetics to assert control of the changing dynamics of their non-work lives. Although longshoremen characters readily engage in contemporary pastimes, their apparent difficulty in finding physical and mental distance from the workplace results in subconscious tension that stems from the vulnerability they experience when engaged in something other than the masculine-male models their occupation reinforces. I also suggest that because the longshoremen’s employment relies on a certain type and level of engagement that does not benefit the mental, physical, or emotional body beyond recompense that it is even more challenging for the worker to fully disengage. I demonstrate that, though haplessly ill-defined, the longshoremen’s participation in leisure and recreational activities serve

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

to temper his negotiation of masculine manhood within the middle-class frame, and that the activities he chooses actively reflect his ability, or lack thereof, to move beyond the boundaries of his working-class status.

The phenomenon of leisure grew as American workers experienced increasing freedom from the workplace. Changing workplace demands allowed Americans to engage more readily in recreational activities; hobbies and home ventures were popularized during the fifties as were athletic and family events.<sup>48</sup> But, while both automation and white-collar jobs afforded certain classes of workers increasing freedom from the jobsite, many blue-collar jobs continued to rely on manual labor and long work hours. In the fifties, manual labor sustained certain aspects of the longshore industry, as lifting and moving cargo and sorting produce were primarily accomplished by hand. The questions which then arise are, What is the role of leisure and recreation in the lives of the working class if their recreational activity invites the manipulation of object by hand, body, or strength? And, does leisure imply a certain classlessness of activity, regardless of whether the activities typically associated with non-work recreation usually assume certain economic or cultural means to engender active engagement? This is where the outstanding gaps in working-class leisure studies makes it difficult to explore the cultural shifts in recreation that may have occurred among American working-class men during the nineteen-fifties.

“Leisure” is difficult to define. The etymological root of the word stems from the Latin *licere*, “‘to be allowed’ ... [and] thus contains within itself the dualism of freedom and control, individual agency and constraint.”<sup>49</sup> If one considers the definitions of leisure provided by select

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<sup>48</sup> Ralph G. Giordano, *Fun and Games in Twentieth-Century America: A Historical Guide to Leisure* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Chris Rojek, *Leisure and Culture* (Great Britain: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), 191.

scholarly resources, leisure is alternately and vaguely: “freedom or opportunity to do something specific or implied;”<sup>50</sup> “activity that is set apart from other obligations such as work and family and provides individuals with the opportunity for relaxation, the broadening of knowledge, and social participation;”<sup>51</sup> or, “simply freedom from activities centering around the making of a livelihood.”<sup>52</sup> Leisure implies a freedom of and from activity that is restricted by the very things allowing its limited existence. Generally speaking, work (or engagement in any routine activity that might be regarded as work) creates the framework for the leisure state. Without work, all activity arises equally within unrestrained time, and there is no core activity from which the individual must find freedom. Ergo leisure—and, by extension, recreation—does not fully exist without the boundaries created by one’s active engagement in non-leisure activities. This circular relationship implies both active and passive (dis)engagement in certain types of actions, be they compensatory, obligatory, or voluntary in nature.

Within the very basic consideration of leisure as a means of engaging in activity that allows one to disengage from the rigors of occupational responsibility is the suggestion that *any* non-work activity conducted by working-class men can be considered “leisurely” because the men are removed from the physicality and drudgery of manual labor. However, studies on working-class leisure activities are complicated by a lack of parameters clearly outlining the actions that either do or do not constitute its makeup. Although theorists<sup>53</sup> have attempted to provide well-rounded views of leisure, their inability to standardize the activities comprising its makeup problematizes attempts to explain shifts in both downtime and recreation among

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<sup>50</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “leisure, n.” Accessed September 20, 2016.

<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/view/Entry/107171?rskey=kVpxXM&result=1&isAdvanced=false>,

<sup>51</sup> Paraphrasing Joffree Dumazadier’s “Toward a Society of Leisure,” in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*, eds. George Ritzer and J. Michael Ryan (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 351.

<sup>52</sup> Ida Craven, “Leisure: According to the Encyclopedia of Social Science,” in *Mass Leisure*, eds. Eric Larrabee and Rolf Meyersohn (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Leisure studies typically extend from the field of sociology.

individuals of lower class standing. Thus, it can be suggested that leisure might constitute any activity that is not or cannot be associated with the duties and responsibilities of paid employment, but that it also must consist of some form of disentanglement from the physical and psychological constraints of work. As Erwin O. Smigel asserts, “How leisure is used may differ with time, with class and occupation, as well as with nationality and religion; and how it is used affects how it is defined.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, the theoretical basis of my analyses centered on longshoremen’s leisure activities, or the lack thereof, stems from Barrett’s definition of leisure: “doing something for its own sake and not for any purpose.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Erwin Orson Smigel, *Work and Leisure: A Contemporary Social Problem* (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1963), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Cyril Barrett, “The Concept of Leisure: Idea and Ideal,” in Winniffrith and Barrett, eds., 11.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### **“I want my name!” Hypermasculinity and Death of the Ego as Responses to Change in Arthur Miller’s *A View from the Bridge***

Using the two-act version of Arthur Miller’s *A View from the Bridge*,<sup>1</sup> I will demonstrate that depictions of the longshoreman character’s inability to navigate small, yet significant, changes in the domestic environment suggest the challenges blue-collar workers faced in surmounting the socio-cultural and socio-economic boundaries of midcentury America. I will also show that because the longshoreman characters’ working-class identity and resulting affect are so strongly rooted in the ego, it alone serves as the family’s greatest impediment to social progress. I propose that in re-writing *A View from the Bridge*,<sup>2</sup> Arthur Miller presents the main character’s rejection of changing social norms as a form of disruptive masculinity, the foundation of which is his status as a longshoreman. I define “disruptive masculinity” as the overt display of “hypermasculine” characteristics often attributed to both real and fictitious longshoremen. These characteristics—depicted through Eddie Carbone’s inherent insecurity, lust, jealousy, anger, and fear—are the primal,<sup>3</sup> guiding instincts of masculine-male projection that contribute to the internal and external negotiation of the longshoreman’s psychological tension. In *View*, the protagonist relies on these emotive traits to guide his decision-making processes, which then hinders his ability to express socially acceptable emotional responses related to the changing roles of men. By addressing contemporary issues directly impacting men’s domestic and social

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge* (New York: Compass Books Edition, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> *A View from the Bridge* was originally produced as a one-act play.

<sup>3</sup> See Ehrenreich for discussions of primal instinct.

roles, *View* challenges traditional notions of manhood as it relates to protecting and providing for the family unit. Additionally, *View* advances the notion that the hypermasculine identity cultivated by men like Eddie Carbone—men who would rather die than lose the respect of their households and communities—leads to the eventual destruction of both the ego and the body.

The primary setting of *A View from the Bridge* is the South Brooklyn<sup>1</sup> tenement apartment where Eddie Carbone, a forty-something longshoreman, his wife Beatrice, and their 18-year-old niece Catherine live. The apartment is a near perfect mirror of the Carbone family household; its simple façade serves as a container for their working-class ways and hides the family's tension from the external world. Deficient of modern accessories and adorned with only a few non-essential items—a rocking chair, a radio-phonograph, and a hat stand—the apartment is somewhat unassuming yet distinctly outmoded for a residence in the 1950s. A “worker’s flat, clean, sparse, [and] homely,”<sup>2</sup> its relative meagerness starkly depicts the residents’ solitary lives and the barrenness of their emotional connectivity.

From the outset, the members of the Carbone household navigate the residential space and each other in ways suggesting significant familial discord and class-based ideological disagreement. Eddie’s controlling force as head of household,<sup>3</sup> Beatrice’s passive restraint as his wife, and Catherine’s subconscious disloyalty to both her family and working-class upbringing create a palpable tension among the three residents. As the play progresses, and as Beatrice’s cousins Marco and Rodolpho take up residence among the Carbones, it becomes obvious that the

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<sup>1</sup> The actual setting of the play is a Brooklyn neighborhood known as Red Hook. In “Ambiguous Borders: Exploring Definitions of Community in Red Hook, Brooklyn” (Columbia University, 2014), Shannon Gies describes Red Hook as “historically... a poor, working class [sic] neighborhood, with many of its residents working on the waterfront” (6). Additional descriptions by Gies and her interviewees suggests the neighborhood in the fifties was a “crime-ridden,” forgotten, and staunchly bifurcated enclave of impoverished descendants of immigrant dockworkers and even poorer ethnic minorities. For additional descriptions of Red Hook, see: Timothy Dugan, “Red Hook Notes,” *The Arthur Miller Journal* 5.2 (Fall 2010): 29-50; Jackson, 286-287.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Dugan characterizes Eddie Carbone as “hardworking, honest, reliable, but dangerously moody” (41).

pseudo-nuclear image Eddie has attempted to create is a guise to hide his failures as a working-class man. While Eddie's character exemplifies the hard-working breadwinner model of working-class men during this period, his moral decrepitude suggests an inherent move away from traditional working-class values but not towards the middle-class attitudes or behaviors that emerged during this period. His character's unwillingness to accept certain paradigmatic shifts occurring in the world around him suggest the inability of working-class men to accept many of the sociocultural changes that influenced the shifting dynamics of the home environment. Eddie's psychological tension in relation to these changes is depicted through an unnaturally intimate bond with Catherine, emotional distance between his character and Beatrice, and conflicting relationships with brothers Marco and Rodolpho. As such, it becomes apparent that the Carbone family house demonstrates the residents' confinement to not only the space but the conventions of working-class life, the limitations of their socio-economic position, and the head of household's struggle to retain their family's structure relative to changes occurring in the outside world. Consequently, the characters Marco and Rodolpho illustrate that certain tensions cannot be negotiated within the household environment when there is such adamant resistance to change; the family's tensions must be forced into the open to break the inhabitants' ties to the residential space and the dynamics that allow the continued dominance of a tradition-directed masculine-male figure.<sup>4</sup>

Eddie Carbone's masculine-male characterization is challenged by many of the social changes trickling into the Carbone household, such as demographic shifts in the American

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<sup>4</sup> In *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961), David Reisman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuell Denney describe the "tradition-directed" male as being guided by "the fear of being shamed" (24). While other longshoremen characters may be more aptly described as "other directed," the fear of being shamed is a common thread in these films. In particular, the "shame" is not necessarily linked to specific deviances or secrets but rather the stress of disappointing either the self or another male figure.



workforce, modernization of domestic roles, and increasing social acceptance of less masculine-male figures. As his character attempts to regain control within the expanse of these psychologically destabilizing events, he positions his masculine affect at the forefront of his negotiations with his family. In these scenes, his character asserts traditional notions of working-class values to redirect attitudes, actions, and behaviors that reflect domestic and social progress as defined by post-World War II middle-class mores. In *Men in the Middle*, James Gilbert suggests that the masculine-male's "desire to maintain clear cultural and social distinctions between men and women," was at the root of the male's identity crisis. In *View* and other longshoremen dramas, this thread is presented through the characters' negotiation of male-female and male-male relationships in which conflicts of both gender and *gendered* relationships arise. Specifically, Eddie Carbone's attempts to assert masculine-male dominance over both feminine and effeminate characters suggests the inability of working-class men to relinquish certain aspects of their manhood when negotiating socio-cultural conflict among both groups—women who occupy non-traditional roles in the home environment and men whose perceived masculinity (or lack thereof) is in disharmony with the work environment. As Eddie's character is forced to address these changes, he struggles to maintain authoritative control of his household to both define his role in society and reaffirm the positionality of others. By clinging to traditional notions of manhood and domesticity, his character effectively limits his family's ability to traverse the socio-cultural and socio-economic boundaries that become increasingly apparent as the play progresses.

There are four pivotal scenes in which Eddie's character negotiates male-female and male-male relationships using hypermasculine affect in the attempt to negate changes to the family's traditional working-class lifestyle. In the first, Catherine enthusiastically announces the

offer she has received to work as a plumbing company stenographer.<sup>5</sup> Hand-picked from among her classmates, the school principal has assured Catherine that if she accepts the offer, she will have an opportunity to graduate early and save nearly a year of additional coursework. Refusing to consider how her exceptional performance has played in her selection and how she will have a chance to earn a decent income as a woman, Eddie categorically dismisses the opportunity because the company's location and its workers are similar to the dock environment. Eddie's familiarity with the company's setting and the class of people employed triggers a visceral response founded in his work along the harbor. In response to Catherine's news, he says, "That's one step over the waterfront. They're practically longshoremen."<sup>6</sup> Here, two factors influence Eddie's response. The first factor is that even though Catherine grew up in a longshoreman household and interacted with longshoremen on a regular basis,<sup>7</sup> the working-class atmosphere is not befitting a young lady of her character<sup>8</sup> or education.<sup>9,10</sup> The second is the allusion that Catherine was selected for the job because she has already achieved the highest social position her education will afford.

When Eddie rejects the notion of Catherine working as a stenographer, a job that would only provide lateral "advancement" from one working-class environment to another, he implies that she is too good for the job she has been offered. This sense is based on Eddie's belief that Catherine is better than her current social position which, in essence, is a direct reflection of his influence in her life. Therefore, when Beatrice insists that "if nothin' happened to her in this

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<sup>5</sup> Miller, 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Catherine's familiarity with Eddie's work colleagues.

<sup>8</sup> Midway the scene Eddie refers to Catherine as "Madonna," suggesting either her real or perceived innocence as a young woman.

<sup>9</sup> Note that Catherine's "education" consists of secondary and secretarial school, only.

<sup>10</sup> This trope appears in "On the Waterfront," in which Edie Doyle's father insists on sending her back to school after her brother's death, because he does not want her getting involved with longshoremen or their affairs.

neighborhood it ain't gonna happen no place else," it validates Eddie's unstated fears that Catherine cannot do any worse—or any better for that matter—than she is doing under his roof and among members of the longshoremen community.<sup>11</sup> As it becomes obvious that the only advantage to the job is a steady income, Eddie's reaction to Catherine's announcement becomes increasingly anxious—a symbol of his character's deep-rooted fears about domestic change, particularly as it relates to Catherine. He attempts to control his anxiety by reasserting his position as Catherine's "father" and benefactor, stating that she should have consulted him before accepting the offer<sup>12</sup> and suggesting that the money she will earn is an affront to the support he provides.<sup>13</sup>

Eddie rejects the notion of Catherine entering the workforce to avoid acknowledging that he has not *prepared* her for anything more than her current working-class life. Because his social position has limited Catherine's opportunities for upward mobility, Eddie also must admit that he is *not able* to offer her anything better than their current social status allows. The question which then arises is not whether the job and its environment are suitable for Catherine but how well-suited she is for it. This underlying current is symbolized by the house and the role it plays in Eddie's dominance over Catherine. Eddie uses the house to control Catherine's social and economic position,<sup>14</sup> and, in doing so, limits her access to external influences that could potentially advance her class status. While secretarial school affords the potential for social, economic, and even cultural advancement in some ways, the actual potential for mobility is limited because the education she receives only prepares her for feminized blue-collar work.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on their sidewalk interactions, it can be inferred that at least two of Eddie's coworkers, Mike and Louis, live in the same neighborhood as the Carbones.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> In reference to the job, Beatrice says to Eddie, "I don't understand you; she's seventeen years old, you gonna keep her in the house all her life?" suggesting Catherine's limited ability to engage in activities external to the home environment (13).

The job offer challenges Eddie's control, thereby reducing his authority. And, as the job will afford Catherine varying levels of independence, ranging from financial self-sufficiency to freedom from the home environment, by keeping her in the house and enrolled in school, Eddie inherently limits her potential for social progress. If she is no longer dependent on Eddie for such basic necessities as money, shelter, and guidance, she may not need him in any other way.

Catherine's looming independence threatens Eddie's self-imposed designation as her "parent" by eliminating the need to protect and provide for her. Because his responsibility to care for Catherine has been internalized as his "home," wherein his purpose rests in his ability to shield her from the complications of working-class conditions,<sup>15</sup> his role as her father, in turn, has safeguarded them both from his lascivious desires. Over time, the emotional guilt and shame that surround his feelings for Catherine have been suppressed by overt displays of manliness that center on his breadwinner role. Thus, the house and Eddie's authority become the most obvious and most tangible symbols of his love for Catherine, but only as much as they are able to disguise his true feelings. Once those symbols are threatened and his and Catherine's roles in the house and each other's lives shift, his displaced emotions for her as his "home" are made vulnerable, and his desire to keep her in the house, away from other longshoremen-like men, and under his control becomes shadowed in lust. When Eddie's masculine-male role is threatened by opportunities that might assure Catherine's social and economic advantage among other longshoremen-like men—men like Eddie—the damaging effects to Eddie's ego lead him to renounce other chances for Catherine's social progress, such as those presented through her relationship with Rodolpho.

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<sup>15</sup> Consider Eddie's rant in which he indicates to Alfieri that he took from his and his wife's mouth to make sure Catherine was well-taken care of (36). In "On the Waterfront," "Pop" Doyle's father suggests a similar level of responsibility for his daughter, when stating how he and his wife scraped together what little money they had to ensure Edie's success away from the longshoremen environment's influence.

As Eddie's connection to Catherine becomes more vulnerable, his relationship with Beatrice suffers in its attempt to maintain the appearance of traditional male and female domestic roles. In two relatively brief scenes, Beatrice's character employs role reversal to assert her own domestic power while creating the illusion that Eddie retains authority as Carbone head of household. In doing so, Beatrice effectively shifts the balance of responsibility away from the dominant male figure and strips him of his traditional masculine role, thus demonstrating her agency in the domestic environment and his limited influence.

The first scene in which Beatrice challenges Eddie's patriarchal role suggests an imbalance in household decision making, with Beatrice—and not Eddie—leading the course of action for important family discussions. During the family's conversation about Catherine's job offer, Beatrice directs the activities surrounding Catherine's announcement to make it appear that Eddie's approval has influenced Catherine's willingness to accept the job. By establishing the context in which the announcement is presented—a family dinner during which Beatrice directs Catherine's every move into and out of the room<sup>16</sup>—Eddie's interactions with Catherine are positioned in ways that allow Beatrice to challenge the motivations behind Eddie's rejection of Catherine's job opportunity. In doing so, Beatrice also eliminates the familiarity of Eddie and Catherine's conversational interplay by sending Catherine out of the dining area one last time<sup>17</sup> so that she, alone, can discuss the job offer with Eddie. When she asks if Eddie plans to “keep [Catherine] in the house all her life,”<sup>18</sup> Eddie is threatened by Beatrice's unstated accusations regarding his feelings for Catherine. His position towards the job changes, and he agrees to let Catherine work.

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<sup>16</sup> Miller, 8-17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

A few scenes later, Beatrice and Eddie's stilted dynamic is portrayed once more when Beatrice asks Eddie when she's "gonna be a wife again."<sup>19</sup> Here, the female character's agency plays off of the male character's inherent insecurities about his manhood and calls into question the integrity of his spousal role. The resulting effect is Eddie's inability to discuss their lack of intimacy, which then emphasizes his failure to accept the shifting dynamics of their relationship. In this and the previously referenced scene, Beatrice's assertion of power indicates that changes to male and female domestic roles often challenged working-class men's attempts to maintain masculine-male dominance of their households.<sup>20</sup> As their functions in both home and society were increasingly compromised by the emergence of less-traditional roles, the primal instincts guiding the working-class man's actions and behaviors were exposed, resulting in significant implications for their non-work lives.

Additional scenes depicting Eddie's futile attempts to retain hypermasculine influence over his household occur in accordance with Marco and Rodolpho's arrival. Immediately beset by the complications their arrival presents, Eddie informs Beatrice and Catherine that they should approach Marco's and Rodolpho's presence as if the men were not there: "I don't care who sees them goin' in and out as long as you don't see them goin' in and out. And this goes for you too, Bea... You don't see nothin' and you don't know nothin'."<sup>21</sup> By inculcating Beatrice and Catherine in the "deaf and dumb" culture of longshoreman work relations,<sup>22</sup> Eddie relies on the tenets of his job to effectively dictate how the brothers will be treated in the Carbone house. Eddie's insistence that Beatrice and Catherine adhere to the longshoremen's moral code is an

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Consider Lucy's comments regarding Tommy's refusal to let her work in "Edge of the City."

<sup>21</sup> Miller, 15.

<sup>22</sup> The longshoremen's code of silence, referred to as "D&D" or "deaf and dumb," wherein workers neither see nor hear anything related to questionable waterfront activities, plays a major role in "Slaughter on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue," "On the Waterfront," and "Edge of the City," in which characters are expected to maintain their silence regarding the murders of fellow longshoremen.

attempt to ensure the women's loyalty to other working-class values, many of which are subsequently challenged by the brothers' presence.<sup>23</sup> In much the same vein,<sup>24</sup> once the brothers arrive, Eddie asserts his masculine influence by instructing Marco and Rodolpho on the actions they can and cannot take while residing in the Carbone apartment. Presented as ways of keeping the brothers safe and ensuring their success as working-class men, Eddie's "protective methods" are employed to help him maintain control of both his house and home. But because his character is weakened by immoral proclivities, the brothers are better positioned than the women to challenge Eddie's dominant male role. These challenges lead to the complete dissolution of Eddie's authoritative control of both house and home and finalize the destruction of his ego and body.

Eddie, Marco, and Rodolpho are connected by heritage, the residential and work spaces they share, and their respective responsibilities (or seeming lack thereof) to their families and themselves. Where the men differ is in their varied approaches to American work and social life, particularly as related to working- and middle-class norms. Whereas Eddie and Marco typify more traditional male roles, Rodolpho is depicted as a more "modern" male whose apparent focus on leisure and recreation detract from established working-class protocols. Three scenes depicting the interactions between these characters demonstrate how challenges to working-class notions of traditional male roles disrupt masculine-male control, increase hypermasculine vulnerability, and destroy the dominant male's position as a model of blue-collar bravado. In each, the characters are positioned in ways that suggest the struggles of hypermasculine males to maintain situational, emotional, and behavioral power when their positions are threatened.

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<sup>23</sup> The female characters seem emboldened by the displacement of Eddie's power. Catherine disregards Eddie's commands to stay away from Rodolpho. Beatrice begins telling Eddie how to act by suggesting that "It's not nice," to wait for Catherine and Rodolpho on the city sidewalk.

<sup>24</sup> Consider Eddie's request as a form of "silencing" the actions of Marco and Rodolpho.

These scenes drive the protagonist's impending downfall and culminate in his predictable demise at the hands of a male figure whose social role is less compromised by change.

By virtue of their maleness alone, brothers Marco and Rodolpho shift the balance of masculine-male power in the Carbone household. As a middle-aged, married, father of three (Marco) and a young bachelor (Rodolpho), the brothers threaten Eddie Carbone's dominant male role by challenging his views on working-class manhood and appropriate displays of masculinity. From the outset, their different personalities, perspectives, and motivations are counterbalanced against Eddie's staid modalities; as such, his character is positioned towards the cousin whose ideologies most closely align with his own (Marco, the quieter and more determined of the two) and against Rodolpho, whose actions and behaviors typify more middle-class male roles.

Eddie's attitude towards Rodolpho is established early in the play. On the night the brothers settle into the Carbone family household, Eddie purposefully ignores Rodolpho by engaging Marco in conversations of hardened work environments and the responsibilities of male breadwinners—aspects of the masculine-male idea with which Rodolpho is unfamiliar. As the conversation between them ensues, Eddie also disregards Beatrice's and Catherine's attempts to include Rodolpho in these exchanges. It is only when Rodolpho indicates his intention of becoming an American, achieving the penultimate heights of the American dream, and flaunting his success in his homeland<sup>25</sup> that Eddie begins to take note. Rodolpho's seeming indifference to hard work as a necessary component of goal accomplishment and his apparent desire for flashy consumer goods contrasts with Eddie's traditional working-class principles. Here, it becomes

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<sup>25</sup> "I want to be an American. And then I want to go back to Italy when I am rich, and I will buy a motorcycle" (Miller, 21-22).



apparent that their conflicting ideologies about success will engender significant distress between the two men and their relation to other members of the Carbone household.

Eddie's animosity towards Rodolpho grows as Catherine's affections for the young blonde blossom into a reciprocated romantic relationship. Pitted against Rodolpho for Catherine's affections, Eddie is unwittingly positioned as the young bachelor's sexual rival.<sup>26</sup> In response, Eddie's damaged ego is projected through hypermasculine affect; displays of jealousy and anger become physical exercises of power to demonstrate his masculinity and raise questions about Rodolpho's manhood.

Beatrice and Catherine will not validate Eddie's increasing animosity towards Rodolpho, so Eddie's character must be removed from the apartment to receive confirmation of his feelings. This scene marks the first instance in *A View from the Bridge* in which Eddie is positioned away from the residential environment to face his character's psychological tension. By shifting Eddie into the neighborhood—which serves as a secondary longshoremen community—Eddie is better positioned to address challenges in the family home as they relate to class conflicts. Among a community of longshoremen co-workers possessing similar attitudes about work and masculinity, Eddie's working-class positionality is reaffirmed. As he stands on the street corner, his co-workers Louis and Mike stop by to provide a running commentary of their opinions about Rodolpho. The longshoremen contrast Rodolpho with his brother Marco, “a regular bull,”<sup>27</sup> by suggesting that Rodolpho is a slacker whose very presence reduces their job focus. Thinly veiled comments about the blonde Italian's sense of humor<sup>28</sup> echo Eddie's concerns that Rodolpho is “a weird”<sup>29</sup>—an effeminate, and quite possibly homosexual, man unfit for both dock work and

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur D. Epstein, “A Look at *A View from the Bridge*,” *Texas Studies in Literature* 7.1 (Spring 1965): 112.

<sup>27</sup> Miller, 27.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

Catherine's loyalty. As Mike says, "Well, he ain't exactly funny, but he's always like makin' remarks like, y'know? He comes around, everybody's laughin."<sup>30</sup> Mike's observations also suggest that while Rodolpho may not be "funny" in the comedic sense, there is something quite laughable about his attempt to work as a longshoreman. But when Eddie tries to disengage from the conversation by not providing situationally appropriate responses,<sup>31</sup> Mike reiterates his statements to drive home the fact that Rodolpho is different from the average dockworker. Rodolpho does not fit in to longshoremen culture, and everyone knows it.

Once other masculine men validate Eddie's contempt for Rodolpho, Eddie begins blaming the young Italian for his family's changing dynamics. By this point in the play, it is apparent that the traditional working-class values Eddie established for his household are disintegrating. The shifts occurring in his family have displaced Eddie's masculine-male role as protector, provider, father, and husband.<sup>32</sup> In essence, his household position is threatened by potential relinquishment of the breadwinner role to other males and an acquiescence to gender imbalances in the residential environment. As such, when Eddie is faced with joining in the attacks against Rodolpho or defending him, he is caught between allegiances to work and home—positioned in *A View from the Bridge* as Eddie's traditional working-class values and his family's emerging conformity to middle-class mores. He attempts to reduce the psychological tension he experiences in this situation by retreating into quiet resolve as a form of silent

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Given the nature of longshore work and banter, a "situationally appropriate response" would be one in which Eddie agrees with Mike and Louis regarding their assessment of Rodolpho. Consider Terry Malone's affect in "On the Waterfront," when questioned about the murder of Joey Doyle.

<sup>32</sup> Marco and Rodolpho's arrival allows for the infiltration of middle-class ideology through the depiction of increasingly modern men's roles. Additionally, Rodolpho's position as a "cosmopolitan" man is highlighted in various scenes throughout the text. Compare the similarities between Eddie and Rodolpho's relationship and interactions between Charlie Malick and Tommy Tyler in "Edge of the City." In both instances, the hypermasculine male character appears threatened by the less masculine male's affect, which eventually leads to physical displays of power by the "manly" men.

agreement; but, when Catherine and Rodolpho enter the scene, his primal instincts come to the fore, and he explodes in fits of anger, fear, and hurt.

Eddie's attempts to demonstrate the stark differences between himself and Rodolpho are presented to Catherine through the dual lenses of masculine-manliness and working-class ethics, behaviors, and attributes. In a moment of passing restraint, he says to Catherine: "That's right. He marries you he's got the right to be an American citizen. That's what's goin' on here. You understand what I'm tellin' you? The guy is lookin' for his break, that's all he's lookin' for." By suggesting that Rodolpho is using Catherine to avoid working for his success, Eddie insinuates that Rodolpho may not be willing to work at all.<sup>33</sup> When Catherine disagrees, Eddie expounds thusly:

You don't think so! Katie, you're gonna make me cry here. Is that a workin' man? What does he do with his first money? A snappy new jacket he buys, records, a pointy pair new shoes and his brother's kids are starvin' over there with tuberculosis? That's a hit-and-run guy baby; he's got bright lights in his head, Broadway—they guys don't think of nobody but theirselves! You marry him and he next time you see him it'll be for divorce!<sup>34</sup>

Rodolpho's apparent inability to balance work and non-work life in more traditional ways suggests a greater focus on consumption than productivity, a shift away from traditional working-class customs. As such, Eddie focuses on Rodolpho's seeming lack of responsibility to suggest that his character's values are misplaced. If Eddie's character believes "that leisure [has] value only in the context of work, as a complement to work ... [and] when it is divorced from

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<sup>33</sup> Rodolpho's example of success runs counter to Eddie's perception of hard work, especially considering that Rodolpho's take has been reframed as opportunities handed to him by Eddie.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 30.

work, and made an exclusive activity,”<sup>35</sup> then the perception of Rodolpho as being unworthy of Catherine shifts to his inherent unacceptability as her suitor and his inferiority as a man.

Rodolpho’s affinity for leisure makes him weak and reaffirms Eddie’s belief that Rodolpho’s masculinity is debatable. Furthermore, beneath the surface of Eddie’s accusations is his character’s refusal to acknowledge that Rodolpho’s behaviors are more closely aligned with emerging middle-class values, which makes his actions more acceptable in mainstream society. Rodolpho’s depiction as a “cosmopolitan” man, one who sings, cooks, sews, and spends time engaged in such leisure activities as dancing and attending movies, expresses the possibility that working-class individuals could attain varying levels of middle-class “success” through the purchase of consumer goods or achieve a middle-class lifestyle through some semblance of work-life balance. Thus, Rodolpho’s character demonstrates a “way out” of working-class life, especially for those—such as Catherine—who are unwittingly trapped in its confines. By engaging Catherine in leisurely and recreational activities, Rodolpho provides the space for Catherine’s character to detach from Eddie’s control and the influence of his socio-economic class status. Moreover, even though there is considerable dissonance between the ideals and activities in which Rodolpho’s character engages and that of other working-class longshoremen in the play, his “flexible” masculinity demonstrates how the symbolism of leisure and mass consumerism reinforced the changes occurring in society’s perception of men’s evolving roles. In effect, the character Rodolpho underscores Eddie’s inability to either support Catherine’s social mobility or upend the Carbone family’s sociocultural and socioeconomic limitations; he also exemplifies ways to move beyond these socially constructed boundaries. Eddie’s antagonism towards Rodolpho represents his inability to accept the paradigmatic shifts in his

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<sup>35</sup> Sean Sayers, “Work, Leisure, and Human Needs,” in Winniffrith (49).

household that are reflective of changes in the greater social environment. Consequently, as his feelings toward Rodolpho harden, Eddie's masculine affect increases in hypermasculine displays of the ego.

Eddie's animosity towards Rodolpho manifests in primal, hypermasculine displays of hatred and lust that stem from his "obsessive love"<sup>36</sup> for Catherine. Upon encountering the two lovers after their first sexual rendezvous, Eddie becomes enraged and evicts Rodolpho from the family residence. When Catherine insists that she too will leave, Eddie grabs and kisses her passionately.<sup>37</sup> The kiss renders both Catherine and Rodolpho defenseless, and once she is freed from Eddie's grasp he grabs and kisses Rodolpho, too.<sup>38</sup> These vulgar acts of sexually and emotionally charged rage demonstrate Eddie's desperate attempt to dominate the young couple. By forcing himself onto them sexually, he exerts physical power and control, effectively—though briefly—creating both chaos and bodily distance between the two. Physically repositioning the couple allows Eddie to disrupt their corporeal and sentient bond to create a space in which he can express his desire for Catherine and demonstrate the ease with which Rodolpho can be emasculated. In effect, wedging himself between Rodolpho and Catherine allows his character to reconcile the now-disparate house and home spaces disrupted by Rodolpho's arrival. By forcibly removing Rodolpho from Catherine's proximity, Eddie attempts to reestablish the real and imagined spaces in which he and Catherine alone once existed. But because he is not able to relinquish his masculine-male dominance, he becomes vulnerable to his hypermasculine instincts; an inability to control his physical body betrays his emotional longings

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<sup>36</sup> Epstein, 113.

<sup>37</sup> A similar vulgarity occurs in "On the Waterfront," in which Terry breaks into Edie's home and forces himself onto her in both fear and passion. In this instance, however, Terry's character is somewhat quelled by emotional release, whereas Eddie's character is impelled by his emotive display and the resulting consequences.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, 49.

for Catherine. By relying on hypermasculinity to feminize and unman Rodolpho and maintain authority over Catherine, Eddie's ego manifests as the physical force that overwhelms his ability to accept change, particularly as it effects the domestic environment.

The biggest threat to Eddie's physical and psychical resistance to change comes in the form of Marco. Initially depicted as Eddie's working-class ally,<sup>39</sup> Marco represents midcentury men in transition—men who ascribed to traditional values of work and home but were not wholly resistant to the changing social and domestic roles assumed by themselves or other men.<sup>40</sup> Marco's adaptability to change is depicted through interactions with his brother Rodolpho, whose rather lofty aspirations for success are neither fully supported nor overtly discouraged.<sup>41</sup> But, when his brother's dreams are threatened by Eddie's increasing levels of betrayal—first, in the form of a kiss, and then by informing immigration of their illegal status—Marco responds violently in ways harkening to his work as a longshoreman. He accuses Eddie of breaking the code of silence that has allowed him and his brother to stay in the country for roughly six months,<sup>42</sup> publicly spits in Eddie's face as a sign of personal disgust,<sup>43</sup> and returns to the Carbone house to kill Eddie in front of members of the community that both connects and divides them—the longshoremen.<sup>44</sup> By placing Eddie's transgressions on full public display in the streets in front of the Carbone house, Marco reveals Eddie's limited adherence to the same working-class codes he imposed on his own family—honor and respect for the family unit, with

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<sup>39</sup> Consider descriptions of Marco's family and work ethics and the way he commands Rodolpho into following Eddie's rules (39-40).

<sup>40</sup> In many ways, the characters Marco and Axel Nordmann/North ("Edge of the City") are similar in their negotiation of working- and middle-class values, as both are oddly positioned between their acceptance and rejection of both.

<sup>41</sup> Miller, 19-24.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>44</sup> In the film version, produced in 1962, Eddie is killed with a longshoremen's hook (*A View from the Bridge*, directed by Sidney Lumet, [1962; Continental Film Distributors], DVD).

particular emphasis on the head of household, privacy and secrecy, and protection of their working-class values. In betraying his family, Eddie's character betrays both himself and the working-class community to which he belongs. Thus, at the hands of a more masculine-male figure—one whose masculinity is rooted in his ability to accept the changing tides of both work and non-work life<sup>45</sup>—Eddie dies publicly, in shame, like the “animal” he has become.<sup>46</sup> The physical and psychological bodies are destroyed by his character's inability to negotiate both his masculinity and hypermasculinity in ways that allowed for separation of the ego from the affect.

Eddie Carbone's “pathological”<sup>47</sup> adherence to working-class values renders his character incapable of successfully negotiating masculine affect in ways that would make it possible for him or his family to move beyond the boundaries of their current class conditions. By rejecting the supposed threat of middle-class values encroaching on his working-class ideologies, Eddie's character is buried, both literally and figuratively, in his working-class identity. The character's inextricable linkage to the working-class role and the longshoremen profession has as much impact on his psychological affect as it does on his social position. Once the ego is challenged, the job and its defining values become a focal point for the character to regain control in destabilizing situations. In these instances, the character's attentions are turned inward to focus on his work and life experiences to help him navigate change. In *A View from the Bridge*, the longshoreman character's tragic, yet necessary, death is a response to the working man's inability to accept socio-cultural shifts related to emerging middle-class norms and the resulting impact on working-class family values. Like many men, Eddie's character's “ideal” manifests in the attitudes and behaviors of the class framework to which he is accustomed; and, as such, he

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<sup>45</sup> While Marco is, in essence, a minor character with significant influence, it can be assumed that his character's limited response to Rodolpho's actions suggest either approval or apathy, but not rejection.

<sup>46</sup> Miller, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Ehrenreich, 138.

relies on the longshoreman role—and is forced to navigate his life through the longshoreman lens—because he cannot see beyond the boundaries of that state.

Orm Överland posits that Arthur Miller’s dedication to both “story and theme,” stems from his ability to juxtapose elements of psychoanalysis with “socio-economic explanations.”<sup>48</sup> By positioning Eddie’s ego at the forefront of his character’s persona, and by using the character’s deeply embedded identity as a working-class man to define his masculine affect, Miller combines these literary approaches to portray a man burdened by the weight of his social status. Over the course of *A View* it becomes obvious that Eddie Carbone is unable to reconcile his projection of himself, his displaced emotions for Catherine, and the reality of change. When his ego begins to fully manifest in displays of disruptive masculinity, he finds himself beyond the limits of his traditional working-class values and is forced to negotiate this dissonance against the emergence of middle-class norms. Because the intensity of his conflict cannot be contained within either the house (the apartment), his home (Catherine), or his acceptance of social and domestic change (Rodolpho), he is forced into the streets where this tug-of-war is eliminated.

“Bound with a psychological and social determinism that seals [his] fate,”<sup>49</sup> the doggedness of Eddie Carbone to prove his deeply intertwined identity as both a masculine and working-class man suggests that his need to rely on such reactionary responses as primal instinct inhibit his character’s ability to deviate from ingrained patterns, particularly in response to socio-cultural change. By denying himself the freedom to explore the evolving nature of his household, especially through appropriate emotive responses, his character’s hypermasculine affect manifests in a desperate attempt to cling to the ego and what it represents in name only.

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<sup>48</sup> Orm Överland, “The Action and Its Significance: Arthur Miller’s Struggle with Dramatic Form,” *Modern Drama* 18.1 (Spring 1975), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Terry Otten, *The Temptation of Innocence in the Dramas of Arthur Miller* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 79.



## CHAPTER THREE:

### **“You’d think I was a guy just trying to make a living, but it ain’t so.” Male Identity Formation in “Edge of the City”**

In this chapter, I use the 1957 film “Edge of the City”<sup>1</sup> to demonstrate how depictions of longshoremen character’s fraternal relationships challenge midcentury notions of male identity formation. Within the emerging middle-class frame, I define “male identity formation” as the core attitudes and behaviors that extend from the longshoremen’s negotiation of homosocial relationships. I suggest that although some cultural theorists have presented the idea that men navigated their changing social and domestic roles alone,<sup>2</sup> the acceptance, rejection, and mediation of male bonds helped working-class men reconcile their external (projected) and internal (authentic) selves by providing safe spaces in which they could remove masculine-male performances<sup>3</sup> and realize their identities as men. By eliminating the psychological burden of performed masculinity in both work and non-work settings, working-class men increased their inherent vulnerability to change, which then allowed their “maleness” to manifest independent of occupation and socio-economic status. In “Edge of the City,” this theme is explored through the triangulated relationship of the leading male characters. Axel Nordmann/North, Tommy Tyler, and Charlie Malick demonstrate the range of performances engendered by working-class men

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<sup>1</sup> Edge of the City, directed by Martin Ritt, 1957 (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

<sup>2</sup> In referencing Warren Susman, Gilbert states that “the much-discussed problems of character and national identity were psychologically ‘redefined as that of personal identity’ ... stemming from a “opposition between individualism and conformity” (72).

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Erving Goffman’s definition of performances as “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. [1959], 15).

and how the masculine-male identity facilitates the negotiation of socio-cultural change during this transitional period. From the overtly hypermasculine to the innately hesitant masculine male, “Edge of the City” shows the challenges working-class men faced when balancing external performances with internalized class conflicts to establish their identities as men.

A series of planned and unplanned life events<sup>1</sup> has led Axel Nordmann/North<sup>2</sup> to the waterfront. It is nightfall when his character appears on screen alone as the apprehensive, leather-jacketed man carrying a small duffle bag in hand. He goes to the longshoremen office to seek work, is turned away until morning, and is cast into the dark to find shelter in an undisturbed corner of the port. The relative ease with which his character navigates the dock environment suggests that he is little more than a byproduct of the surroundings in which he is introduced—the cold, dark, industrial landscape of the city’s waterfront and the solitariness of longshore life when port activity is at a standstill. But within the first few scenes of the film, Axel finds a telephone booth and calls home to the surprisingly archetypical residence in which his parents live. The two-story, single-family structure is a rather standard depiction of 1950s middle-class living spaces and presents a stark contrast to the setting presented on his end of the telephone line. Teeming with knickknacks in nearly every visible space, the house is exceedingly domestic in its familiarity yet somehow lacking in warmth, a sense made obvious throughout the film by his parents’ full-bodied costuming. As the movie progresses, the waterfront harbor and the Nordmann home symbolize Axel’s greatest conflict—whether to accept the working-class lifestyle he has adopted out of necessity or to return to the middle-class life he has abandoned out of guilt and frustration.

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<sup>1</sup> As the film progresses, the audience learns that a number of tragic events, beginning with a car accident that killed his brother and ending with his desertion from the United States Army, have preceded the protagonist’s decision to seek work on the docks.

<sup>2</sup> The character is introduced as “Axel North,” but it is later revealed that his real name is “Axel Nordmann.”

The fullness of the Nordmann home contrasts with the emptiness of the waterfront docks to suggest the challenges of men like Axel Nordmann/North—the “men in the middle”<sup>3</sup> who, during the nineteen-fifties, attempted to find their identities within the shifting frameworks of cultural and economic class boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Within the centermost space of his working- and middle-class lives, Axel’s character struggles to establish his personhood and negotiate relationships that extend from his alternating acceptance and rejection of different social class values. In finding his identity, he sheds the masculine-male masks adopted to navigate these groups and resolve the conflicts associated with his performances of both.

Male identity formation is explored through Axel’s relationship to Charlie Malick and Tommy Tyler. The men’s triangulated connection to each other begins when Axel joins the longshoremen workforce as a member of Charlie’s gang. Tommy supervises an alternate gang of workers, and his suggestion that Axel work with him brings to the fore Charlie’s issues with Tommy. As opposing forces on the city’s docks, Malick’s and Tyler’s characters represent shifts in working-class culture during this period—adherence to traditional values (Malick) and the performance of varying aspects of class identity (Tyler). Positioned between the adversaries is Axel, whose affiliation to Charlie and Tommy demonstrates the need for men to adapt to changes at and away from work as related to emerging cultural mores. Whereas Malick’s character is a fairly static portrayal of working-class longshoremen, Tyler’s character demonstrates the ability of working-class men to construct separate work and non-work identities. Akin to code-

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<sup>3</sup> In reference to James Gilbert’s work of the same title, “men in the middle” were “white, middle-class middle Americans, living in the middle decade of the century, in the midst of a profound questioning of gender identities” (8).

<sup>4</sup> In *Labor’s Text*, Hapke refers to Janet Zandy’s commentary regarding “‘hegemonic’ two-ness,” in which individuals are “in two worlds and belonging to neither... caught between philosophies to collective and individual success” (14).

switching,<sup>5</sup> Tyler's performed masculinity depends on setting, participants, and observers in order to be fully realized.<sup>6</sup> But, it is apparent that neo-traditional attitudes rooted in both working- and middle-class values<sup>7</sup> strongly influence Tommy Tyler's negotiation of daily life and eventually lead to his character's demise. Moreover, the portrayal of his character suggests that while a state of near-classlessness can be performed by working-class men, it can never be fully embodied by them as performers. Thus, even though Tyler's and Malick's characters rival each other on the job, they are inherently similar; both men are imprisoned by the interrelatedness of their work and their identities, which impels their masculine affect and their negotiation of socio-cultural change.

Because Charlie and Tommy have similar work responsibilities but are suggested to have exceedingly different lifestyles away from work, their characters problematize Axel's difficulty separating his personal identity from his occupational and social roles.<sup>8</sup> Whereas Charlie is defined by his longshoreman-ness, Tommy is characterized by his negotiation of the working and middle classes.

Charlie Malick is the stereotypically hypermasculine longshoreman.<sup>9</sup> He is gruff in appearance and attitude, staunchly working class in demeanor and action, and hardened by his

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<sup>5</sup> Code-switching refers to one's ability to shift languages or dialects depending on the context. I use code-switching here to refer to the character's bodily affect in work and non-work situations as a form of shifting between the expected projection of masculinity in either situation. For discussions of code-switching within the context of performativity, see Goffman.

<sup>6</sup> At work, his character is portrayed as a responsible and ethical supervisor whose primary focus is in the job. Based on Lucy's comment later that Axel "doesn't have many friends," it can be assumed that until Axel's arrival, Tommy's engagement with other co-workers was fairly limited. Away from work, Tommy's authority is relaxed and his values are strictly family-oriented. Interestingly, Terry Malloy's character is somewhat similar to Tommy Tyler. His closest connection to other docks workers is his brother, who works for the mob controlling dock affairs.

<sup>7</sup> "Neo-traditional" in the sense that his wife has a job but is unemployed, and he lives in the same building as his family but not the same household.

<sup>8</sup> These themes are also apparent in *A View from the Bridge* and "On the Waterfront," in which the main characters have difficulty navigating the relationship between their identities and their occupation as longshoremen.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Malick's portrayal to the mob boss character in "Slaughter on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue" who says, "I gotta explain ya something— You see, half the guys that are working here on the docks, they got records... they understand muscle. So, everyone once in a while, I gotta make a fist. But don't forget that I take these guys on when nobody wants 'em.

involvement in the waterfront's pervasive corruption. From the outset, it is apparent that his character is guided by the primal instincts<sup>10</sup> engendered by his working-class environment. He controls both his gang and the docks with intensity, using anger, fear, and the threat of physical power to address challenges in the workplace. He is crude, demanding, uncivilized, and relentless in his display of overtly masculine manhood. For example, after he approves Axel's application for longshore work, Malick not only dictates where Axel will work and with whom but how much of a kickback he will provide to Malick for allowing him to work. Consequently, Malick becomes defensive and belittles Axel when Axel begins questioning Malick's authority. Embarrassed and unable to assert himself in front of other longshoremen, Axel submits to Malick's bullying stating, "You don't have to get rough about it, that's all." Charlie's behaviors are not limited to unseasoned workers; his domineering attitude also extends to established longshoremen. As he and his gang engage in a lunch break card game, Malick grabs his co-worker's sandwich and takes a large bite. He chastises the man for not buying new cards, and then commands him to deal from the deck. There is little to suggest that Malick's character is anything more than what is portrayed of his life on the docks; he is defined by his work as a longshoreman and what that means in the social and occupational landscapes he occupies.

Tommy Tyler summarizes Charlie Malick's characterization by suggesting that his "lower form" of masculine behavior—his hypermasculine affect—limits his progress as a man among other men.<sup>11</sup>

"Now, you take that Charlie," Tommy says. "You gotta laugh. With a guy like him, you gotta laugh at him or beat his brains in... Because that's the lowest form of animal life.

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I mean nobody. Where else are they gonna get a job?" as if the longshoremen's unemployability is an excuse for his irascible behavior towards them.

<sup>10</sup> See Ehrenreich, and refer to the character Eddie Carbone in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>11</sup> Ehrenreich, 56-57.

No maybes. The thing is, a man's gotta make a choice, you know. I mean, there are the men, and then there are the lower forms. And a guy's gotta make a choice. You go with the men, and you're 10 feet tall; you go with the lower forms, and you are down in the slime."

In this scene, Tommy imparts a familiar conundrum among longshoremen and other working class men during this period—remaining loyal to traditional patterns of accepted, male, working-class behavior or conforming to newer notions of masculinity as influenced by the emerging middle-class frame. Men either progressed with the shifting tide of American culture or remained stagnant in their outmoded ways. And, for working-class men, this meant either adopting the attitudes and behaviors of the middle class or rejecting social and domestic change for the familiarity of staid customs. Charlie's character demonstrates that the working man's domineering ways and brutish actions rendered him incapable of change and that his failure as a man was a direct result of his hypermasculinity. If, as Tommy asserts, Charlie is a "lower form," then others more capable of moving beyond their hypermasculine affect to negotiate the choices presented in life were higher forms—"real" men who were above their degraded social positions as longshoremen. When Axel counters Tommy by asking what happens when "you don't want to go with anybody," when neither primal instinct nor more modern expressions of masculinity are chosen, Tommy states, "Then you are alone, man, and that's the worst," establishing the main theme by which Axel's character will begin to create the male bond necessary to form his authentic identity as a man.

As opposed to Charlie Malick, Tommy Tyler's life is portrayed as a counterbalance to both the waterfront environment and the longshoremen's hypermasculine-male affect. Jokingly self-described as "a rich millionaire doing this [longshore work] for kicks," Tommy is

responsible yet carefree.<sup>12</sup> He and his family live in a multi-story apartment building located on a clean, car-lined street in a mixed-use community.<sup>13</sup> Couples casually walk through the neighborhood as school children engage in organized activities on the playground. When shown, Tommy's apartment is modern and sophisticated; white-walled and middle-class by design, the Tyler residence is filled with decorative art and contemporary furnishings. The apartment's spaciousness suggests a refuge from the confines of Tommy's working-class job and the supposed limitations of his family's social status.<sup>14</sup> He and his wife Lucy navigate the space with ease, and their friends, Axel and Ellen, are welcomed into the home to share in the atmosphere they have created. In the apartment, the characters are allowed to explore different aspects of their personalities, which suggests a space in which their inherent vulnerabilities are laid bare. In a surprising portrayal of modern femininity, Lucy asks Ellen to be "casual and a little sexy" when interacting with Axel, yet the women's attention turns to post-dinner politics, during which they both display such uncharacteristic fervor that the men find their discussion "dull" and "complicated." Relatedly, Axel sheds his working-class garb for more casual dinner wear and engages in a bit of amateur bongo playing while Tommy and Lucy dance around the living room. He teases Tommy about his "really bad" dance moves, coyly flirts with Ellen, and joins Tommy's imaginary world of fancy cigars and fine spirits. The tough, defensive persona his character portrays in the work environment is traded for that of a nervous and affable young man enjoying the camaraderie of friends. Tommy's house—a safe space for his character's

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<sup>12</sup> In "Comes a Hero: The Fundamental Principles of Sidney Poitier," Stanley Crouch describes Tommy Tyler as "defensively cocky, humorous, realistically in love with his wife, so playful that he is given to satirical and fully conscious pretensions, a compassionate listener, an almost timidly affectionate father, a fair dancer, a matchmaker, and a man who would rather laugh at or ignore racism than take the change of being inwardly affected by it" (*Film Comment*, March-April, 2011 [37]).

<sup>13</sup> Tommy's neighborhood is shown after he and Axel leave work. A cut scene indicates that although Tommy's neighborhood is quite urban, it is possibly some distance from their work environment.

<sup>14</sup> Per Jackson's comment that the house is an "expression of personal taste" (52).

negotiation of class and the women's negotiation of gender performance—is the first place where Axel can work towards male identity formation. While he does not completely remove the mask of his performed working-class identity, his character is allowed to explore other aspects of life that he has been denied among other men, namely the opportunity to create male bonds without expectation. At the end of the scene, Tommy notices Axel's changing affect, stating, "You're about at, oh, 7½ feet now with 2½ to go," referring to earlier remarks about the differences between men and "lower forms." But Axel shrugs off Tommy's comments by saying that "It's just making believe," thus acknowledging the layers of performativity that shield his true identity.

With the exception of his job, everything about Tommy Tyler's character suggests "middle class."<sup>15</sup> Some of the more obvious markers of his working-class job do not exist in the apartment—such as the tools and accessories needed by manual laborers<sup>16</sup>—and other objects that might suggest the residents' lower socio-economic status are also missing.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it can be surmised that Tommy and his family are well-situated economically; the house is befitting a family of a higher income status than typically associated with members of the working class. Depictions of the house and of Tommy also suggest that he and his family are well-positioned culturally to move beyond the social limitations of his working-class status. He drives a convertible car,<sup>18</sup> listens to modern jazz music, regularly enters dance contests with his wife, and

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<sup>15</sup> According to Kimmel, "Not all working-class men were objects of middle-class ridicule, but they had to redeem themselves by subscribing to middle-class values. Retrieving one's manhood was not about the color of one's collar but about the values one held and the willingness to stand up for them" (164).

<sup>16</sup> Regarding tools and accessories, consider gloves, work boots, and the longshoremen's hook.

<sup>17</sup> Contrast the Tyler's consumer goods with the description of the Carbone house in the first act of *A View from the Bridge*, in which the Carbone family complains about mismatched table linens and a lack of other decorative accessories, such as rugs (Miller, 9), and compare with Terry Malloy's residence in "On the Waterfront."

<sup>18</sup> According to Jackson, the greatest and most obvious symbol of success was a car, "a sleek, air-conditioned, high-powered, personal statement on wheels" (246).



limits his socialization with other working-class men.<sup>19</sup> Tommy's character suggests that work and non-work activity can be separated when leisure is embraced and "the good things of life"<sup>20</sup> are acknowledged. His work-life balance serves as a symbol of man's ability to free himself from the overtly masculine-male role of longshore work without fully comprising his positionality in the domestic and social spheres. As such, his character becomes a beacon for Axel to find his true path within the working- and middle-class frames.

Contrary to Tommy's Tyler's stable home environment is Axel Nordmann/North's apartment, which represents his identity struggle as a man. Juxtaposed between Charlie Malick's apparent lack of residence<sup>21</sup> and Tommy Tyler's domestic bliss, Axel's apartment is a dark, dingy, furnished room in a building on a trash-can lined street crowded with vendors and foot traffic. The apartment and its rather desperate surroundings exude the states of emptiness and transience that Axel's character portrays. It is within this lonesome space that Axel's attempts to reconcile the temporariness of his situation begin—first, by establishing his own place to negotiate conflicts between his projected and authentic identities, and, then, by dismissing the space once he disengages from the anonymity of his adopted longshore life and attempts to return to his parents' middle-class residence.<sup>22</sup> The apartment is a container for his character's conflict and confusion,<sup>23</sup> a place where he can detach from his past while he figures out his true

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<sup>19</sup> Consider the increasing attainability of consumer goods and the ability of all working people during this period to project some semblance of a middle-class lifestyle (William A. Faunce, "Automation and Leisure," in Smigel, 88).

<sup>20</sup> A common sentiment highlighted by Weiss' description of leisure as a "time... made possible by work, not a time in which work is made possible" (Paul Weiss, "A Philosophical Definition of Leisure," in James C. Charlesworth, ed. *Leisure in America: Blessing or Curse?* [Philadelphia: *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 1964], 21).

<sup>21</sup> This trope is presented with slightly lesser effect in "On the Waterfront," in which Terry Malloy appears as somewhat homeless throughout much of the film. It isn't until he is conflicted by interpersonal demons that his residence is depicted on screen.

<sup>22</sup> Consider the relationship between Eddie Carbone's house and his identity in *A View from the Bridge*.

<sup>23</sup> Compare with "On the Waterfront," in which the character Terry Malloy only uses his residence (shown once in the film) to negotiate his internal conflict.

identity. Because his character is trapped between two worlds—the life he has adopted and the life he has left behind—the apartment is presented as the only setting in which he can be removed from everything he knows and connect with himself as a man.

The disparities between Axel's work and non-work lives suggest that Axel must find "home" someplace other than the physical spaces he inhabits. If Charlie's home is work and Tommy's home is the middle-class life he has created away from work, then Axel's home is in the identity he tries to establish between his working- and middle-class lives. But, it is not until late in the film that Axel's sense of self is fully realized. To establish his identity, Axel's character must navigate between the waterfront, Tommy's residence, his parent's house, and the decidedly working-class apartment he has rented. In doing so, the communal aspects of work and leisure allow him to interact with other men in ways that either reinforce or negate his previous homosocial relationships. The waterfront and Tommy's home represent the identities that Axel is attempting to negotiate; his family's residence and his new apartment symbolize the separation of "old" and "new" identities. While the apartment's solitude affords some middle ground to resolve his conflicts, the distance between his and his parents' home gives him the freedom to explore values different from the middle-class norm. In the end, Axel can only find home when there is a confluence of these disparate components of himself. His work as a longshoreman and his interactions with Charlie and Tommy allow him to explore his identity within alternating socio-economic frames without the expectation of conformity to either working- or middle-class life.

Much of Axel's conflict stems from his inability to create and maintain homosocial bonds, which is why the triangulated relationship with Tommy and Charlie is imperative to his

character's identity formation.<sup>24</sup> From living in the shadow of his now-deceased brother ("He was everything I wasn't... I didn't even mind when my mom and my pop favored Andy more than me. I mean, that was to be expected you know.") to resenting his father ("He was rough... I could never talk to my old man. In my whole life, in my whole life, we maybe said three things to each other—good morning, good night, and go to hell.") to butting heads with his commanding military officer ("In the Army, it was like everything else... He was always pushing me. He's like Charlie, you know? Always riding me."), Axel's character develops as a response to other male figures' projections of him.<sup>25</sup> His character's identity is situationally founded in what it could or should be and not what it truly is. In essence, Axel represents the loss of one's sense of self when conflicts challenging one's identity are not addressed. He rejects middle-class notions of familial and civic responsibility to turn his attention towards working-class productivity as a measure of success, but this does not resolve the issues he has left behind in his previous life. These issues follow him into his interactions with other males who mirror past figures—Charlie, as an image of his father and commanding officer, and Tommy as his brother Andy. Once Axel and Tommy solidify their friendship, Axel can release the psychological tension of his conflict, begin to remove his performative masks, and attempt to realize his masculine identity irrespective of setting or position.

Leisure activities serve to mitigate Axel's performativity as a working-class man. His and Tommy's recreational pursuits overlap their work as a way to demonstrate the longshoremen's need for male social bonds. Through leisure, Axel and Tommy strengthen the bond of their relationship without being bound to the core actions defining them as masculine men—their

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<sup>24</sup> We see this in "On the Waterfront," in which Brando's character continuously seeks approval from the masculine-male figures in his life.

<sup>25</sup> Consider the character Terry Malloy in "On the Waterfront," who is unable to move beyond his previous life experience as a prize fighter.

work as longshoremen. Regardless of setting, their friendship conforms to traditional patterns of male bonding that engender camaraderie and provide social support mechanisms. Interestingly, their leisurely pursuits mimic longshore patterns of socialization. As their relationship begins to extend beyond the waterfront docks, one-on-one conversations and group horseplay at work become heart-to-hearts away from the work environment. Eventually, they even create their own “gang” by having Lucy and Ellen engage in their non-work activities. As their emotional bond grows stronger, so too does their physical bond. They sit closely during lunch, pat each other on the back, and, together, posture against Malick’s verbal and physical intimidation.

In all, Axel and Tommy primarily engage in activities that require the bodily movements of manual laborers. Dancing, drinking, bowling, and tossing around a basketball employ full or nearly full use of the male form, though not as strenuously as lifting or moving cargo. By engaging in pastimes that mirror activities conducted on the docks, Axel and Tommy find common ground in both traditional and non-traditional projections of masculinity.<sup>26</sup> They can exert power and force when needed but are also capable of restraint when necessary; and by shedding the defining characteristics of their occupation, they find a fluidity of psychological and physical motion independent of class amid the hardened backdrop of longshore life. But while Tommy navigates these intersecting aspects of class and masculinity with relative ease, Axel’s character has a more difficult time adjusting to this confounding middle space. His lack of experience in either setting—blue-collar work or middle-class leisure—forces the realization that his character cannot “play” at something it is not. Eventually, play portends action; and, in a

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Weiss states, “. . . leisure time becomes a time when men are at their best, making is possible for them to maintain that state in the future When they return to work, the level of maturity and control that they have managed to reach in leisure will affect the tone of what they then do. Though the enhancement of one’s work is not the objective of leisure time, work is an inevitable beneficiary, but only because and so far as it is being engaged in by a more complete man” (Weiss, in Charlesworth, 29). Thus, it can be assumed that by helping Axel become a better man and find his true identity through recreational activity, this transfers to his work on the docks, which is portrayed as the film progresses.

frolicsome joust positioned as a passing diversion between the two, Tommy's death is foreshadowed. Axel's work and non-work lives merge as his authentic self comes to the fore.

As Axel's bond with Tommy grows stronger, his character begins to reconcile his masculine identity. He is emboldened to shed the layers of his past and reveal much more of himself to Tommy and others—starting with his real name, the reason he has arrived in town, and his previous issues with other male figures. As his character wrestles with the psychological conflict of finding himself, the problems he has internalized are externalized as physical actions. He exerts more confidence and forcefulness in his interactions with Charlie Malick and other longshoremen, and he volleys between states of subdued and hardened masculinity. Like other conflicted characters in longshoremen dramas,<sup>27</sup> anxiety and self-doubt belie his toughness and he is unable to fight his demons without the emotional and physical support of a friend.

Axel's character is positioned between Charlie Malick and Tommy Tyler to remind audiences that working-class men's masculinity was not inherently static but that identities were formed in the acceptance, rejection, progression, and regression within the frame of socio-cultural changes presented in work and non-work spaces. To achieve conflict resolution and fully establish his identity as a man, Axel's character must overcome external representations of the lifestyles he has internalized. Near the end of "Edge of the City," another at-work disagreement nearly results in a physical fight between Axel and Charlie. In the attempt to save Axel from Charlie's animalistic rage, Tommy physically positions himself between the two men. When Tommy challenges Charlie's aggression towards Axel, Charlie responds with verbally aggressive insults and physical fury. Axel attempts to help Tommy but is forcibly removed from the action

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<sup>27</sup> Consider how the character Terry Malloy attempts to fight Johnny Friendly alone but is unsuccessful until others close to him demonstrate their support.

by other workers and is made to observe as it occurs between these two symbols of hypermasculine working-class conventions and more modern male values.

Axel's character is mentally and emotionally torn by Tommy's death, and much of this tension results from the inability to assert his masculinity among other males when his closest homosocial bonds have been destroyed. Without Tommy (or his dead brother Andy), Axel is challenged to navigate his turmoil alone and deal with the problems he has both internalized and externalized. If it is considered that Axel's only reason for joining the Army after his brother's death was to escape a domineering father, then it becomes obvious that he must leave town to avoid Charlie Malick after Tommy dies. But because Axel's interactions with Tommy have helped him mature as a man, his character struggles with an appropriate response to Tommy's death—whether to run away from the conflict that remains or to face the issues head on. Initially, his character processes these conflicts by calling home. In what is best described as his character's continued "infantile dependence,"<sup>28</sup> Axel becomes vulnerable to his fear and agrees to go home to his parents. But, because the assurances of his past middle-class life are not enough, Axel visits Tommy's home after leaving his own apartment and before making his way to his parents' residence. When the conversation turns to the circumstances surrounding Tommy's death, and Axel admits that he cannot tell the police what he knows,<sup>29</sup> Lucy screams, enraged, that Axel is "just like the rest of them!" His attempt to return to the middle-class life his parents' residential environment affords as a way of distancing himself from his pain fails, and it becomes apparent that his decision to return home is not a "choice" but a patterned behavior centered on his lack of self-awareness as a man. As Axel is forced out of the Tyler home, Ellen

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<sup>28</sup> "Infantile dependence" on his parents as stemming from a lack of masculine maturity (Ehrenreich, 22). See also Gilbert, 67.

<sup>29</sup> Again, the familiar "D&D" trope of longshoremen culture as presented in fifties film.

grabs his duffel bag and runs after him, suggesting that he has attempted to leave a piece of himself in the environment that helped him develop his identity but that he is being forced to carry the burdens of his past with him to fully establish himself as a man. Ellen implores Axel to break his silence, but he refuses. And, as he wrestles with his misplaced loyalty to the factions that killed Tommy,<sup>30,31</sup> Ellen screams, forcing his character to reckon with his conflict, “Then tell me! Tell me so I understand!” Here, in the space between the symbols of his personal fight, Axel is forced to make a choice.

In the final scenes of “Edge of the City,” Charlie Malick stands as the last remaining symbol of Axel’s identity conflict. To defeat Charlie and what he represents, Axel must address him one-on-one and in front of other longshoremen.<sup>32</sup> He first goes to the hiring hall and demands to see the detective investigating Tommy’s death, thereby partially breaking his silence and the longshoremen’s unwritten code of secrecy. This act sheds the first performative layer of Axel’s blue-collar identity by placing his actions outside of traditional working-class values. But, Axel cannot fully relinquish this mask until he fights Charlie in front of other longshoremen, as the physicality of this lifestyle is required to break down this symbol of his adopted working-class masculinity. In the highly anticipated fight between the two men, Axel throws his entire working-class life at Charlie—his own hypermasculine affect as well as the cargo boxes that symbolize the longshoreman’s life on the docks. Badly beaten but not beaten down<sup>33</sup> by the primal instincts he has tapped into and has to fight against, Axel manages to subdue Malick and, in front of the same crowd of longshore workers who watched Tommy die, drag his limp body to

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<sup>30</sup> It also can be suggested that Axel is wrestling with his own guilt over Tommy’s death, which may serve as a point of catharsis related to the death of his brother.

<sup>31</sup> Consider Terry Malloy’s conflict in “Waterfront” regarding his role in Joey Doyle’s death and his loyalty to the men who betrayed his trust.

<sup>32</sup> Goffman suggests that performances cannot be disengaged until observers believe the performance has been “sincere” (71).

<sup>33</sup> A similar situation occurs when Terry Malloy takes on the mob boss Johnny Friendly.

face retribution, thus affirming Axel's masculinity through his co-workers' watchful eyes. By eliminating the symbols of class he so desperately attempted to negotiate, Axel finds his identity outside of the confines of both groups.

In the film's opening sequence Axel's mother asks, "What did we do to him? What did we do to make him like this?" to which his father responds, "We didn't do anything. It isn't our fault." During this period of social and domestic change, "fuzzy"<sup>34</sup> definitions of masculinity and manhood made it somewhat difficult for men to establish their true sense of identity because of uncertainties regarding acceptable male performances. Axel's character demonstrates that by making one's self vulnerable to other men in both work and non-work spaces, working-class men could explore aspects of their identity that removed the performativity of masculinity associated with their occupational and class statuses. In doing so, they were able to establish the necessary bonds that helped them create identities that neither depended on nor were reflective of their jobs or economic status. In this frame, Axel's character's performative mask of adopted working-class identity is removed along with the expectations of middle-class conformity. By removing these masks, the accepted and rejected aesthetics of both groups helped his character construct a more stable sense of self, independent of socio-economic and socio-cultural positions. Here, the triangulated relationship is emphasized as a way to reduce interpersonal conflict by aiding the masculine-male's resolution of internal issues externally, thus demonstrating that performances of class were untenable when the identity could not be fully realized. In the end, his character's ability to assert himself amid the threat of physical force, potential shame, and a lack of social support from individuals with whom he had not established the necessary bonds, suggest the possibility that working-class longshoremen could define their

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<sup>34</sup> Kimmel, 156. For more on this topic, refer to Ehrenreich and Gilbert.



identities when the male-to-male relationship served to bolster their self-awareness and help them conceptualize their true identities as men.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### **“There’s nobody tough anymore!” Mid-century Manhood in “On the Waterfront”**

In this chapter, I use the film version of Budd Schulberg’s “On the Waterfront”<sup>1</sup> to discuss male maturation within the context of American post-war social conventions. I describe male maturation as both the process of developing into adulthood as well as the means by which men shed the staid modalities of working-class life to adopt certain aspects of middle-class social practices. I define “middle-class social practices” as the values commonly attributed to members of this particular social group, such as a focus on both family and companionate relationships, adult male maturity, and “a new masculinity that prized ‘mental and moral courage’ over physical daring and bravado.”<sup>2</sup> Specifically, I suggest that as working-class men “matured” during the nineteen-fifties and according to emerging social norms, they decreasingly relied on their boyish activities and pastimes, adolescent attitudes and behaviors, and inability to maintain responsibility as they methodically and deliberately adhered to certain middle-class behaviors and ideologies. But, because both real and fictionalized working-class men often had limited association with individuals outside of their socio-economic milieu, I suggest that the adoption of middle-class mores did not result from a complete rejection of working-class ways. In “On the Waterfront” the protagonist’s interpersonal struggles with class, identity, maturity, and masculinity problematize conflicts of maturation by suggesting that working-class men needed to

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<sup>1</sup> *On the Waterfront*, directed by Elia Kazan (Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1954), 2001, DVD.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, 78, citing Amran Scheinfeld, “The American Male,” *Cosmopolitan* 142 (May 1957): 23-25.

rely on tenets of both the working and middle classes to assert their social positions as mature masculine men. “Waterfront” demonstrates the difficulty working-class men had adopting aspects of middle-class life when acceptable models of behavior were not available in their own social circles. Thus, the film suggests that the goals of working-class male maturation were dually rooted in advancing one’s own social position as well as serving as a model for other working-class men.

Before an analysis of either plot or characterization can occur, it is important to address three aspects of this seminal film. First, “On the Waterfront” is well-regarding as a work of social realism and thus imparts conventions of this particular genre of film—a plot heavily dependent on Marlon Brando’s portrayal of Terry Malloy as the “working-class hero” and the technical effects of cinematography that lend to the film’s authenticity as socio-political commentary of longshore corruption. Second, the storyline and its characters reflect real-life circumstances and people, which places the film just outside of documentary representations of working-class longshoremen but not wholly outside of the bounds of creative fiction. Whereas many of the events portrayed in “On the Waterfront” occurred in some way along the shoreline it represents, Budd Schulberg admits (like Arthur Miller before him) some liberties in telling the longshoremen’s stories, but he suggests a need to depict the events as realistically as possible. In the foreword to Joanna E. Rapf’s *On the Waterfront*, Schulberg addresses this aspect of the film by stating: “...in general we were after something we all face every day of our lives. Our waterfront story could be retold today whenever the haves give it to the have-nots.”<sup>1</sup> As such, this critical analysis bears in mind that the character’s portrayals are strongly founded in authentic longshoremen lives during this period of history. Therefore, I take some liberty in

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<sup>1</sup> Budd Schulberg, “Foreword,” in Joanna E. Rapf, “On the Waterfront” (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xx.

reading this film through a slightly deeper lens of psychoanalysis than conducted in previous chapters. Psychoanalytic criticism centers on the supposed motivation of characters to engage in certain actions and attitudes, based on the author's "preoccupation" with the work.<sup>2</sup> Given Budd Schulberg's and Elia Kazan's involvement with the film's production,<sup>3</sup> it can be suggested that their experiences with and intimate knowledge of longshore activity greatly colored their depiction of Terry Malloy in, perhaps, different ways than longshoremen characters in other films developed.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, it should be noted that extensive critical analyses of this film as text have been conducted for the past 60 years. As such, every effort has been made to advance a new perspective for considering this film within the context of post-war middle-class society. Specifically, a good portion of this chapter can be read as a response to the 2011 article "He 'coulda been a contender' for Miss America: Feminizing Brando in *On the Waterfront*," in which the author, Michael T. Schuyler, suggests that Brando's portrayal of protagonist Terry Malloy was, at the least, an act of "gender confusion—until the character stands up and reclaims his masculinity."<sup>5</sup> I suggest that Brando's Malloy is, in fact, neither feminized nor repositioned at the film's end as masculine but that his character works towards establishing a more mature masculinity as other aspects of his life change. Terry's character develops into mature adulthood in concert with loss, particularly as he deals with the deaths of Joey Doyle and his brother Charley the Gent but also as he reckons with his detachment from union boss Johnny Friendly,

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<sup>2</sup> Maurice Charney and Joseph Reppen, eds., *Psychoanalytic Approaches to Literature and Film*, Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987): 14.

<sup>3</sup> Budd Schulberg's and Elia Kazan's testimonies to the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC, 1952) are well documented.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan and Kloss suggest: "Fictional characters are representations of real life and as such can only be understood if we assume they are real. And this assumption allows us to find unconscious motivation[s] by the same procedure that the traditional critic uses to assign conscious ones." Morton Kaplan and Robert Kloss, *The Unspoken Motive: A Guide to Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 4, cited in Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal* (Routledge: New York, 1998), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Michael T. Schuyler, "He 'coulda been a contender' for Miss America: Feminizing Brando in *On the Waterfront*," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 41.1 (2011): 111.

who has served as a father-like figure in his life. While Terry copes with these changes—first through silence, then through anger and aggression, and finally through emotional strength and resolve—his character progresses towards a more adult masculinity. As he evolves from a boy to a man, and this growth is perceived by his character and the characters around him, his masculinity comes to the fore in ways both negotiable and acceptable to the social classes he navigates ideologically.<sup>6</sup>

Terry Malloy has difficulty achieving mature adulthood as a result of his character's limited socialization with non-working-class men. Because his life experiences primarily occur in settings with other longshoremen, there is little expectation among this group that his character will advance beyond the state of boyishness in which he is depicted at the start of the film. Although "pushing 30,"<sup>7</sup> no one in Terry's peer group challenges his masculine-manhood, marital status, or lack of professional or social responsibility. In fact, everyone—from his brother to his boss—refers to him using terminology reflective of his immature status: slugger, punk, kid, our boy, boy, son, and dopey. Away from the longshore environment, Terry's potential for maturation is even further limited by the childlike activities in which he engages. When not at work, he is involved in raising racing pigeons—a notable sporting activity with the exception of one, small detail: the only individuals with whom he is shown to participate in the sport are teenaged members of the gang he started when he was younger, the Golden Warriors. And while it might be assumed that as the elder member of the gang Terry is the "adult," this view is rejected when Terry refers to one of the teens as both an image of the person Terry is now and in

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<sup>6</sup> As opposed to tangibly, as other longshoremen characters demonstrate through their attachment to consumer goods.

<sup>7</sup> Terry's brother Charley the Gent makes reference to his brother's age when offering him a cushy position overseeing some of Johnny Friendly's dockside operations. When Charley suggests that, because of his age, it's "time to start thinking about getting some ambition," Terry responds that he thought he would "live a little bit longer without it."

terminology he later reserves for himself: “This bum here is my shadow.” Terry cannot be seen as a mature adult male by other male characters because he neither views himself nor projects himself in that way; his character is complacent in its adolescent leanings and obviously insecure in its performance of adult manhood. Although his previous life as a boxer does give his maleness some credence of masculinity, it is eventually determined that his character must learn to fight in other ways, namely without his fists, in order to assert adult manhood.

To mature as a masculine adult man, Terry’s character must be introduced to individuals who fall outside of the traditional framework of working-class longshoremen—women and respectable, non-working-class men. In “On the Waterfront,” these entities are represented by the characters Edie Doyle and Father Barry, who help Terry develop into the model of masculine adult manhood that leads him and other working-class men to fight against the forces that suppress their progress as men.

Unlike other leading longshoremen characters in fifties films, Terry Malloy’s masculine-male maturity develops without the influence of a stable home environment. In fact, it could be suggested that Terry does not need a traditional residence because most of what passes for a home life occurs in his waterfront environment—he is taken care of by his brother and Johnny Friendly<sup>8</sup> in exchange for working, he has a comfortable space to lay his head and engage in leisure activity,<sup>9</sup> and he has a “family” of co-workers. But this assumption is negated in the last 20 minutes of film, during which Terry’s loft-like apartment is shown in a scant minute of footage. After testifying against union boss Johnny Friendly, police officers escort Terry to the

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<sup>8</sup> Terry’s relationship to Johnny Friendly is somewhat ill-defined. While it is apparent that both Terry and his brother are employed as Johnny’s henchmen, it is less obvious how this relationship began. In one scene, Terry suggest that Johnny became a role model of sorts when he and Charley were in foster care, but it is unclear if Johnny became a father to the boys or simply a benefactor to help Terry’s boxing career.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to the scene in which Terry is given a “comfortable” position in the ship’s loft.

lower steps of a long staircase. The space and its surroundings appear in good condition; the well-lit area shows no obvious signs of disrepair, congestion, or filth, perhaps suggesting a decent residential setting. As Terry ascends the stairwell, the scene cuts to show Terry entering an apartment door. Here, after a moment of potential confusion about the location to which Terry has been escorted—Edie’s house, his own residence, or somewhere else—the door closes behind him, and his old, worn-out boxing shoes are shown hanging on the backside.

Terry’s apartment is both an odd convergence of his work and non-work lives and a symbol of his ambivalence.<sup>10,11</sup> Juxtaposed between symbols of his conflicted maturity—the courtroom, in which he sacrifices his working-man’s ethical code of silence to testify against Johnny Friendly in a display of honor, truth, and social justice for other longshoremen, and the pigeon coops he and other boys tend—the apartment suggests that Terry’s masculine maturity falls somewhere between performances of conventional middle-class practices<sup>12</sup> and traditional working-class ways. Whereas the cracked wall and well-placed paint can suggest a fairly untended residential quarters but one with potential, Terry’s attention to decorative detail—beginning with boxing shoes, gloves, and photographs placed within close proximity of the main entrance—indicate some attempt to create a home space but one that centers on the only extant markers of his masculinity as perceived by other men, his past experience as a boxer. But, his relationship to his past, and thus the apartment, is tenuous. Like his previous career, Terry’s apartment represents a past that he has difficulty escaping. While boat imagery indicates his new life as a longshoreman, there are considerably more reminders of his past life as a boxer than his current working-class state. Additionally, the largest and most significant symbol of Terry’s

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this theme, see Kenneth Hay, “Ambivalence as a Theme in ‘On the Waterfront’ (1954): An Interdisciplinary Approach to Film Study, *American Quarterly* 31.5 (Winter 1979): 666-696.

<sup>11</sup> Consider Axel Nordmann/North’s relationship to his working-class quarters in “Edge of the City.”

<sup>12</sup> Consider the value of truth, honor, and out-directedness among the middle-class.

apparent readiness for change comes in the form of Edie, who is waiting in the apartment when Terry arrives. Edie represents the domestic life that Terry could have, particularly if he continues to accept the adult responsibility he has exhibited in the courtroom. But, in the dissonance of his situation and the setting, Terry escapes to his childhood retreat<sup>13</sup> where he finds further conflict.

Terry moves through the apartment as he does much of life—quietly disconnected from both the immediate physicality of the environment and oddly removed from his positionality within its confines. The rapidity of Terry’s movements through the apartment suggests that he avoids engaging with both the space and the things in the space in order to create emotional distance. A lack of attachment to either the apartment as place or the objects therein allows environmental connectedness to less adult-like settings, such as the pigeon coops and playground that appear in the film.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, if Terry does not actively engage with the house as home, then it can be suggested that he is not at home when he is there. The apartment serves as little more than a generic reminder of his past failures as a man and his inability to advance socially with any real progress. By virtue of the boxing-related items, the apartment reminds Terry exactly how much of his life has been dictated by others. As a boxer under the management of Johnny Friendly and the watchful eye of his older brother, Terry was forced to “take a dive” and lose his chance at a professional title.<sup>15</sup> A child-like admiration for his brother and the father figure that took them under his wing derailed Terry’s boxing career, and the gloves, shoes, and photographs are consistent reminders of his inability to stand up to these figures, whether in or

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<sup>13</sup> Terry quickly exits the apartment to find solace among his racers, only to discover that Tommy, the young “champ” has killed the birds. “A pigeon for a pigeon!” he yells, referencing Terry’s role as a “stool pigeon” against Johnny Friendly.

<sup>14</sup> Consider Axel Nordmann/North’s negotiation of the playground setting in “Edge of the City” and Rodolpho’s seeming avoidance of work to visit the movies and other non-waterfront locales in *A View from the Bridge*.

<sup>15</sup> Alone with his brother, Terry references the match in terms of his brother’s supposed “adult” protective role over him: “You was my brother, Charley, you should’ve looked out for me a little bit. You should’ve take care of me just a little bit... I could’ve been somebody, instead of a bum... It was you.”



outside of the apartment. By avoiding the apartment, Terry not only avoids himself but the harsh realities of his adolescent-like life. It is not until the end of the film, when he can no longer alternate between spaces to avoid those aspects of life traditionally managed within a residential setting—real emotionality, psychological and physical detachment from the work environment, and non-work-related activity—that he can and does go home. But, because internal conflicts do not allow him to “be at home,” his traditional home space creates cognitive dissonance. Thus, Terry’s perpetual displacement allows him to distance himself from the sense of place typically created within a home environment to, instead, attach his “home” elsewhere. The resulting effect, however, is that this constant movement destabilizes Terry’s identity, leading to his limited maturation as a man.

In his futile attempt to establish the apartment as a somewhat domestic environment, the space conveys a middle ground towards maturity, but one that his character is not wholly capable of embracing. Thus, his detachment forces him to find the familiarity and safety of home in other areas of his life, namely among the “family” he creates with Father Barry and Edie Doyle. Father Barry and Edie Doyle provide a way for Terry to experience certain aspects of middle-class life without having to fully adhere to its principles.

As a surrogate parent, Father Barry provides direction and guidance to Terry’s character, but not with the heavy handedness of Johnny Friendly’s authoritative expectations. Once Father Barry demonstrates to Terry and other longshoremen his willingness to “go all the way,” to remain loyal to the longshoremen’s fight against corruption, his paternal-like support emboldens Terry’s character to face his greatest fears and struggles—beginning with being truthful with Edie about her brother’s death and ending with standing up to Johnny Friendly after Charley is killed. Father Barry’s greatest demonstration of support for Terry, and the clearest sign that Terry

acknowledges his support, comes in the form of coded language during an impromptu eulogy. When Kayo—pronounced K.O. like the abbreviated term for “knockout” in boxing—Dugan is “accidentally” killed by a pallet of ill-positioned Irish whiskey, Father Barry stands over his lifeless body to address the longshoremen on both sides of Johnny Friendly’s corrupted power structure. As Terry and others listen to the Father’s impassioned speech, Barry says, “Only you have the power to knock them out for good,” making a veiled reference to Terry’s ability to avenge Kayo’s death. Father Barry’s speech leads to an almost spiritual conversion for Terry, which is relayed through lighting effects and Marlon Brando’s angelic posturing. As a result of his “conversion”—Terry’s realization that traditional working-class values are limiting his fellow co-workers’ freedom from their corrupt working environment—he implores one of Johnny Friendly’s henchmen to stop throwing things at the priest and eventually “knocks the man out” as he persists in disrupting Father Barry’s homily. Terry’s attempt to dissuade the man’s acts through non-violent means suggests a shift away from the reactionary responses of both his training as a boxer and his hardened working-class life. But, his ability to restrain himself until absolutely necessary, to disengage the man from his show of disrespect, suggests a level of maturity that the man is incapable of displaying. Here, Terry attempts to be respectful while also demanding the same show of respect from other workers. This indicates a crossroads for Terry’s character: he can either return to the adolescent patterns he has followed for so long, the juvenile delinquency of his “old family” (his brother Charley and Gent and his “father” Johnny Friendly), or he can shift towards more adult-like behaviors with his “new family” (Father Barry and Edie Doyle). When this decision is made apparent to Terry, it appears to other characters as well. As Terry’s brother and his associates witness his action and his changing attitude towards that type

of juvenile behavior, so too do Father Barry and Edie—and, at that moment, all parties recognize the potential for Terry’s growth as a masculine-male adult.<sup>16</sup>

Much of Terry’s conflict as an adult is resolved through his relationship with Edie Doyle. While the priest provides some guidance as an obvious “father” figure in Terry’s life, Terry’s real motivation towards masculine-male adulthood stems from his interactions with Edie. With Edie, Terry’s character quite literally moves from the playground to his apartment<sup>17</sup> and navigates both discussions and activities centered on marriage, weddings, and growing up.<sup>18</sup> Terry and Edie also engage in the only recreational activities apparent in the film, during which they participate in such companionate activities as sharing a beer at a local saloon and dancing during a wedding reception.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, Edie—one of only two female characters in “On the Waterfront”—is the only one to see through Terry’s masculine-adult façade.<sup>20</sup> Thus, their relationship encourages Terry to renegotiate his disparate performances of pre-adulthood for that of authentic male portrayals.

Early in the film, when discussing the death of Edie’s brother Joey, Terry says, “I’m only trying to help you out. What more do you want me to do?” to which Edie replies, “Much more. Much, much, much, much more,” which sets the stage for Terry’s growth as an adult as he works towards demonstrating to Edie his capabilities as a responsible male figure. When he finally confesses his role in Joey’s death, Terry’s character is literally positioned between a rock and a

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<sup>16</sup> This is similar, in effect, to Tommy Tyler’s acknowledgement that Axel Nordmann/North is growing into his identity in “Edge of the City.”

<sup>17</sup> In “Edge of the City,” Axel Nordmann/North’s character makes similar spatial moves with the character Ellen.

<sup>18</sup> In their first, full scene together, Terry remarks that Edie “grew up very nice,” placing her character in the present. Her response, when asked if she remembers Terry at all, is that she recalled he was “in trouble all the time,” repositioning his character to his childhood.

<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Terry’s character spends such little time engaged in recreational or leisure activity because he does not often engage in work. If Terry’s character does not need the work-life balance attempted in other longshoremen dramas with more “adult” male characters, then the only leisure he is consuming is time, which he has plenty of.

<sup>20</sup> After Terry walks her home, Edie says to her father, “He tries to act tough, but there’s a look in his eye.”

hard place—the discussion occurs at the top of a pile of rubble, and their conversation is drowned out by the sound of a ship’s horn. When Edie runs away from him, Terry eventually runs back to her, begging her to admit that she loves him. The promise of Edie’s commitment, in the form of mature adult love, motivates Terry to shed his psychological conflicts and embrace the potential of a new life, one founded in masculine adulthood.

The death of Terry’s brother, Charley the Gent, catalyzes his character’s shift towards accepting adult masculine manhood and the social conventions of that identity. When he discovers his brother’s dead body, Edie again begs Terry to consider moving to somewhere where they will be safe from the union boss’ revenge. But, for the first time in the film, Terry asserts adult masculine confidence by directing the actions occurring in the scene. He removes his brother’s body from the longshoremen hook pinning him to the wall, tells Edie how to manage his brother’s remains, directs her to get the priest, and vows justice for Charley’s death. Unlike previous scenes in which Terry passively responds to the actions of other characters, he directly engages the setting to perform his emerging masculine adulthood. Because Charley is no longer capable of protecting Terry or making his life’s decisions, Terry must assert his own power as a man. In doing so, he shifts away from the hardened working-class principles of his upbringing and work environment, the silent acceptance of other men’s power and authority, to more clearly embrace select tenants of the middle-class— his own ability to make decisions directly impacting himself, his family, and his colleagues. Also, by directing Edie’s actions in the scene, he performs a variation of the head-of-household role. But because he allows Edie to physically act on her own behalf, he acknowledges her ability to carry out the decision as she sees fit, giving her some freedom as a woman in this newly created domestic sphere. To further demonstrate to himself and Edie that he is now becoming a man, Terry secures Charley’s gun to

both protect his family and seek justice. During his attempt to exact hypermasculine force against Johnny Friendly and his cronies, which harkens to a partial reversion to his pugilist days and his adolescent leanings as a juvenile delinquent, Terry encounters his new father, Father Barry, who reminds him to relinquish his old ways for his new-found principles: “You wanna be a brave man? Well, firing lead into another man’s flesh isn’t being brave... You can’t fight with anything but the truth.” Here, in Terry’s near-final struggle with his adult identity, Father Barry suggests that Terry *can* be a man (and that he is not one quite yet), but that he has to give up old patterns to achieve authentic adulthood. It is at this point that Terry’s character decides to use his words, instead of his fists, to fight Johnny Friendly’s corruption.

Because Terry’s character does not have any examples of middle-class masculinity to follow, he must become his own. When his courtroom testimony against Johnny Friendly does not result in the validation his manhood requires, his character must meld working- and middle-class behaviors to achieve some semblance of an authentic masculine adulthood—one founded on the values and principles of such middle-class attitudes and behaviors as integrity and honor. To do so, Terry must meet Johnny Friendly on their shared turf, the waterfront docks, to express his conflict using both his voice and his masculine force. Although his words summon a seemingly supportive crowd of longshoremen to his side, his actions bring to the fore his co-worker’s lingering opinions that he is just barely approaching mature adulthood. In this scene, Johnny Friendly becomes the second character to use the word “man” in relation to Terry, but, like Father Barry, does so to assert Terry’s limitations in this area: “You think it makes you a big man if you give the answers!” And, when Terry and Johnny’s verbal exchange becomes a physical fight, one of the longshoremen characters watching from the sidelines<sup>21</sup> says, “That boy

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<sup>21</sup> In many ways, this scene references Terry’s experiences as a boxer as the watchful longshoremen are positioned “ringside” to his match with Johnny Friendly.

fights like he used to,” suggesting that Terry—in the eyes of those around him—is still a kid. But Terry does not fight like he used to, and he is pummeled by a man at least twice his age. With Terry seemingly out of the equation of being able to perform his longshoremen duties, he is removed from the circle of working-class manhood that defines his character. To further illustrate this point and Terry’s lingering immaturity in the eyes of his fellow working-class citizens, the ship boss tells Johnny Friendly after the fight that “He’d better get these men to working,” that is, everyone but Terry. This is when his character becomes emboldened by his new family’s middle-class-like hands-on support and words of encouragement and Father Barry’s secondary references to boxing. He rises to his feet and stumbles to the loading dock, longshoremen hook in hand. He is a symbol of working-class ethic and middle-class integrity, a model of mature masculine adulthood. Terry achieves authentic masculine-male adulthood when the destructive parts of his working-class status are eliminated and the residual aspects combine with the more positive components of his potential middle-class reality.

Terry’s character evolves into a man when the insecurity of his boyhood is left behind. To become a man, Terry must sacrifice particular aspects of himself as related to the longshore environment. However, many of those same things must be relied upon to ensure his ability to accept certain middle-class practices. He gives up his juvenile leanings and his reliance on his old family to create a new nuclear family, and he relinquishes the aggressiveness of the working-class background intimated by his previous experience as a boxer. But, he must address his adolescent side, his working-class family, and his boxer persona to embrace the opposite—an adult role as a leader, a family man, and a fighter for justice.

Terry Malloy's growth as a character harkens to Barbara Ehrenreich's discussion of "The New Psychology,"<sup>22</sup> an offshoot of traditional psychology in which individual maturation was seen as a result of growth through personal experience. According to Ehrenreich, new psychology focused on one's ability to navigate both the external and internal worlds creatively while acknowledging that the ability to do so was a matter of individualization and not a conformity to social mores. This perspective allows readers to see Terry Malloy's "growth" within the context of both the social class portrayed in the film and the overarching, though visually absent, class that looms over his character. As Terry shifts away from a seemingly reluctant adherence to the working-class ideologies in which he has been inculcated, his character begins to "grow" in integrity, thus symbolizing his maturation as a man and his potential to achieve the middle-class aesthetic. Interactions with Edie Doyle and Father Barry guide his character's transformation by allowing him to, as Ehrenreich points out of men during this period, "[move] from one 'peak experience' to another"<sup>23</sup> and to fully engage in those experiences to greater depth as a "person." Throughout, these experiences are presented as interpersonal conflicts that challenge his character's negotiation of mature adulthood; but, with a "family" to support him, Malloy is positioned to accept his mature role and serve as an example to other working-class men.

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<sup>22</sup> Ehrenreich, 88-98.

<sup>23</sup> Ehrenreich, 90.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **The Longshore Life: Interviews and Observations with Retired Longshoreman Mr. Bennie B. Taylor**

For roughly fifty years, Mr. Bennie B. Taylor worked bananas and other commodities as a longshoreman on the city of Tampa's waterfront docks. A unionized worker in a supervisory capacity, he would direct work on thousands of ships, lead hundreds of people, and load and unload cargo by hand and machine. He would also go from living in some of Tampa's worst neighborhoods to owning property in some of its best. Since retiring in the early 2000s, he has maintained a strong connection to the longshore industry, demonstrating a level of dedication that most people will never see or experience in their lifetimes.

This chapter, based on interviews and observations, is a case study of Mr. Taylor's experience as a working-class longshoreman who traversed the socially constructed boundaries of race, culture, and class to achieve what is best described as a middle-class lifestyle. Because the longshoreman's voice is so rarely documented, I have provided excerpts of my interviews with Mr. Taylor<sup>1</sup> as a way to bring context to the imagery depicted on stage and screen. It should be emphasized that although certain parallelisms exist between Mr. Taylor's real-life story and the fictionalized portrayals discussed thus far, his own work history as a member of a non-white ethnic group in the southern United States, and his role as a longshoremen supervisor, differs significantly from popularized depictions of Caucasian northeasterners along Atlantic coastlines.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts have been edited for brevity and clarity.



But, throughout history, and across race, geographic, and economic lines, the work, camaraderie, and experiences of both real and fictitious longshoremen meet at the center of the docks.

### **A Boy's Life**

My father's life began on a small farm in Georgia. By the age of about 6 (depending on whose version of his birth year you believe), he and my grandmother had moved to Tampa, Florida where—save for a trip to Pennsylvania as a child and an extended vacation to Georgia as an adult—he has lived ever since. Like most people, his life has followed the typical trajectory of school, work, marriage, family, and retirement; however, it has been somewhat *atypical* in its Horatio Alger-like quality of success, and in the level of personal and professional achievement he has sustained in consideration of his exceptionally humble beginnings.

Bennie B. Taylor was born in 1937 in “a small country place; back in the woods.”<sup>1</sup> The land where my grandmother, Alma, gave birth to my father is now barren of houses; open fields and dirt roads line the tracts where she, her grandmother, and other family members once lived. As my father grew older, he and my grandmother moved from farm to farm to dairy within the general vicinity of Marshallville, Georgia. My father attended school while my grandmother picked cotton, peaches, or pecans—whatever was in season at the time. At some point in their lives, Bennie and Alma moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and stayed with an aunt and her husband before they returned to Georgia for a brief stint. By the early 1940s, they had moved to Florida, leaving their past lives far behind.

In Tampa, Bennie and Alma lived with Alma's mother in a neighborhood referred to as “The Bottom,” a densely populated area just east of Ybor City near 27<sup>th</sup> Street. By all accounts, my father grew up in Ybor City and surrounding areas that are, now, either defunct or gentrified.

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<sup>1</sup> Bennie B. Taylor (retired longshoreman), interview by Tomaro I. Taylor, August 25, 2016, transcript.

He attended local Catholic and public schools, and, like many children, played stickball and worked odd jobs to “make a nickel”<sup>2</sup> in order to buy candy, ride the streetcar, and go to the movies on weekends. His work at the city of Tampa’s waterfront docks began almost by happenstance: A friend’s brother suggested that he and his friend Louis make some money by selling passersby discarded bananas. The boys sold “ripes”—bananas that were too mature for transport—for twenty-five, fifty, or seventy-five cents depending on the number of hands strung together to make a bunch. Bennie and Louis maintained their little business for a short while as they found the work considerably more profitable than previous experiences delivering Coca-Cola to grocery stores or shining shoes. The boys continued selling bananas along Adamo Drive, the road abutting the back of the city docks, until they began working, officially, at the Port of Tampa. The year was 1950. My father was 13 years old.

When Bennie and Louis began working on the docks, Port Tampa Bay was entering a period of expansion. By the end of the decade, the Port was better positioned to accommodate larger ships with greater tonnage due to continued deepening of Ybor Channel.<sup>3</sup> During the same period, Bennie’s responsibilities on the docks had gradually increased from counting bananas to handling cargo. The channel project would conclude in 1960, around the same time Bennie would purchase his first home.

### **On the Job**

In the scant 10 years between selling bananas and buying a house, my father and other longshoremen would experience significant changes in the way work would be conducted along

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<sup>2</sup> Taylor, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, *Annual Report, Chief of Engineers for Civil Work Activities*, various years, <http://cdm16021.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16021coll6>, Accessed \_\_\_\_\_, 2016; “About Port Tampa Bay: History,” *Port Tampa Bay*, 2016, <https://www.tampaport.com/About-Port-Tampa-Bay/About-Port-Tampa-Bay/History>.

the docks. In Tampa, improvements to the surrounding waterways would eventually correspond with other changes along the harbor, as the port's greater capacity for ships would require increased automation to support the steady flow of cargo and commodities in and out of Tampa Bay. In accordance, dock work would shift from a primarily manual activity to one in which objects once manipulated by hand, such as bananas, would be moved by machines.

Longshoremen and stevedores would figure prominently in these changes as the workers conducting the majority of dock work. In Tampa, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local #1402 would supply the bulk of these workers.

ILA Local #1402 was chartered December 3, 1935 in Tampa, Florida. Founded by Perry C. Harvey, Sr. and others,<sup>4</sup> the Local is recognized for its steady workforce of primarily African American men from varied social and economic backgrounds. Bennie joined the union in 1955 when, by his own accounts, he “got up to be a big, physical working force”<sup>5</sup> and could enter the ranks of other card-carrying men in Tampa who would travel between the Union Hall and the city's port to earn a day's wage. While the lack of historical documentation makes it somewhat difficult to know the exact number of Local #1402 members at the time that Bennie joined the union, rough estimates suggest a longshoremen workforce of between 200 and 500 men during that period.<sup>6,7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The USF Department of Anthropology African Americans in Florida Project archive identifies Perry C. Harvey, Sr., John L. Lavelle, Michael Lazarus, \_\_\_ Johnson, and at least one other individual as the union's founding members (Special Collections Department, Tampa Library, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida).

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> In 2013, I interviewed Dr. Maurice Harvey regarding his family's involvement with ILA Local #1402. Harvey's father served as union secretary prior to his death in 1999. When asked about the availability of union records, Dr. Harvey commented that many of the minutes from the longshoremen meetings had been lost because “nobody ever picked them up from the house” (Dr. Maurice Harvey, interview with Tomaro I. Taylor, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Membership is currently estimated at 276 individuals. Attempts to contact the source for historical information were not returned (“UnionFacts.com,” <https://www.unionfacts.com/lu/32872/ILA/1402/>). Mr. Taylor indicates a membership of roughly 400 to 500 people at one point (Taylor, 2013).

From Mr. Taylor's perspective, what *is* known is that many of these men fit the general profile of how longshore workers have been depicted in the popular media over time—strong, capable, and hardworking. In 2014, when attempting to create a broad view of Tampa's longshoremen industry during the 1950s, I asked my father if "all types of men" attempted jobs as longshoremen. His response was affirmative, with the caveat that many men could not maintain their positions due to their limited physical capabilities; they simply were not strong enough.<sup>8</sup> When encouraged to describe the specific characteristics required of longshoremen, my father responded: "It takes physical strength to be a longshoreman, because the work [is] hard and under some of the worst conditions you would ever think could exist...heat, cold, dust, toxi[ns]." Hearing this, I then asked for further clarification regarding the physical strength that he deemed necessary of longshoremen to work successfully during the 1950s.<sup>9</sup>

BT: We had bags that weighed 110 lbs., and one person would tote those bags by himself. We loaded wood pulp that weighed 500 lbs., and two men would pick it up and stack it up.

TT: How would they pick it up?

BT: Physical strength.

TT: With their hands?

BT: Hands.

TT: How far did you have to carry stuff like that?

BT: Sometimes, up to 20 feet.

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Bennie B. Taylor (retired longshoreman), interview with Tomaro I. Taylor, July 27, 2014, transcript.

While “brute strength”<sup>10</sup> factored prominently in a longshoreman’s ability to maintain work, he first had to secure a job. Each day, longshoremen would check the Union Hall’s announcement board for work, and—at the appropriate time— venture upstairs the two-story building on Harrison Street to participate in a selection process similar to a “shape up.”<sup>11</sup> During this process, available workers were selected for jobs and placed in “gangs” to work. After checking on, the men would leave the Union Hall and travel roughly one mile to Port Tampa Bay where they would work the cargo ships until it was time to “knock off.” The cycle—from shaping up to checking on to knocking off—occurred with every arriving vessel.

The often laborious and repetitious nature of longshore work is portrayed accurately in popular media. But where 1950s film and literature miss the mark is by limiting depictions of the technological advancements occurring on the nation’s ports during this period. As late as 1957, longshoremen films continued to depict outmoded means of handling cargo by eliminating or reducing references to automation. In “Edge of the City” and the cinematic version of “A View from the Bridge,” the longshoremen’s hook features prominently in both general work and violent, tragic scenes. According to my father’s experiences, however, the days of using the hook in Tampa were long past by the late-fifties. Instead, the 1950s marked a period of automation along the city’s docks, with palletization and containerization leading the charge.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> ILA Local #1402 uses a similar practice to the one described in Charles P. Larowe, *Shape-up and Hiring Hall: A Comparison of Hiring Methods and Labor Relations on the New York and Seattle Waterfronts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), but the activity occurs in the union hall among unionized longshoremen: “Under the traditional hiring system, longshoremen seeking jobs “shaped up” each morning at the docks where they usually worked. They waited in the street until a hiring foreman came out of the door of the pier warehouse and blew his whistle, then formed a sort of horseshoe around him. From this group—which typically outnumbered the available jobs—he picked the men for the day’s work. Men who were picked in the “shape-up” were guaranteed only four hours work.”

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Donovan, “Longshoremen and Mechanization,” *Journal for Maritime Research* 1 (1999): 66-75, accessed September 7, 2016, doi:10.1080/21533369.1999.9668300.

TT: Over the years, has the job changed? ... Has the type of work changed?

BT: The type of work has changed [as a result of] automation and containerization.

TT: What kind of automation?

BT: Palletization.

TT: Palletization? What does that mean?

BT: That means that you put everything on a pallet, and a lift truck or forklift picks it up instead of men picking it up... That's called palletizing... the other way was break bulk.

TT: Break bulk?

BT: Break bulk was when everything was loose, and everything had to be done by hand.<sup>13</sup>

To better understand my father's perception of the strength required of longshore work, I questioned whether there were other workers or types of jobs that required the same level of physicality necessitated by longshoremen during this period of transition towards increased mechanization. He replied by stating, "There was no other labor force that could compare with the longshoremen, as far as being in [that type of] environment, that could do the work that the longshoremen were doing." I queried further:

TT: Not even, say, construction workers?

BT: Construction workers do not work as hard as longshoremen.

TT: What about railroad [workers]?

BT: I would say, the longshoremen did the most strenuous work, because everything

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, 2013.

either was handled by one man or two men.

TT: Right. Instead of a team.

BT: Yeah, where, let's say, [in] railroad and construction work, they worked in groups.

During the same interview, he made a very telling statement: "I can truly say there is a God, because it would be impossible for longshoremen in my age bracket to still be alive and still be in the physical conditions that we are [in, and] to be able to keep going and doing like we're doing, because [those were] very, very bad conditions."

### **Off the Job**

In many ways, Tampa's longshoremen population fared just as poorly off the docks as they did on the docks. According to Mr. Taylor, the longshoremen's poor working conditions and relatively poor social conditions compounded under society's umbrella-like perception of the men as being at "the bottom of the barrel."<sup>14</sup> While it is possible to conclude that this stereotypical view of all longshore workers stemmed from their seemingly idle nature and somewhat regular patronage of bars surrounding the Union Hall, Mr. Taylor also acknowledges that the workers' backgrounds and morals contributed to the overarching sentiment surrounding these hard-working men. Contrary to prevailing attitudes at the time, my father estimates that nearly two-thirds of Tampa's longshoremen in the 1950s were "very productive people... they owned homes, they sent their kids to school; a lot of college kids were longshoremen's kids, and they were very recognized in the community, such as [at] church [and] civic events."<sup>15</sup> He also acknowledges that much of their success could be attributed to their strong focus on family.

Often, it was the family—but, most specifically, the wife—who facilitated the longshoreman's movement into different social circles. My father states that his first wife was

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<sup>14</sup> Taylor, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

instrumental in helping him navigate different social settings. By his own admission, he is certain that he, “would [not] have been accepted, being a longshoreman, if it hadn’t been for her.”<sup>16</sup> A female spouse gave longshoremen husbands “another outlet,”<sup>17</sup> but even that type of intermediate assistance had its limits. When asked to consider the social activities in which longshoremen participated during the 1950s, my father quickly responded that he could not think of any. Some gentle prodding led him to consider community dances as settings of social activity, but he admitted that his own experiences differed slightly from that of other men he knew: “Occasionally, I went to events... sponsored by different clubs. Civic clubs. Community affairs.”<sup>18</sup> However, even these activities proved somewhat challenging to navigate as the longshoremen rarely mingled with attendees of other professions. He states, “Even though you were in the same place, there was some form of separation, because if you were, say, a longshoreman, [your] family and friends stuck together, and the others did the same. But, during [the] course of the evening, you would come [into] contact [with other attendees.]”<sup>19</sup> When asked if his younger age served as a hindrance to more active participation in other social events during that period, his response was brutally honest: “I think [one] of the reasons was segregation in that era of time—why we couldn’t go and do some of the things that we would’ve [done] if we’d had the chance to do [them].”<sup>20</sup> As such, economic opportunity, public perception, and mid-century social climate served as the most limiting factors for Tampa’s longshoremen; their families, work experiences, and occupational networks were their least confining.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



## **A Longshore Kind of Life**

When my father began working on the docks, he and other longshoremen were decidedly “working-class;” they easily fell within the category of individuals for whom the rather staid occupational and economic terminology was defined. Although he personally differentiates between the working and middle classes as a matter of socialization, my father’s notions of leisure, home, and family life stem from a deeper well of professional achievement and personal involvement.

Following the end of the decade—just a few short years after he joined the union and a few short years before he became a “company man”<sup>21</sup> as a longshoremen supervisor—he was, by his own estimation, “middle class.”<sup>22</sup> He had a house, a car, a family, and sufficient income to pay his bills. Beyond these rather superficial markers of social class, he had an unstated drive to continue bettering his condition, and the standing of those around him, even when his own situation might have been considered “good enough” by society’s standards for longshoremen. Following purchase of their home in Progress Village, my father and his wife built a home in Belmont Heights in order to help care for his wife’s younger siblings after their mother died. As his daughter, my sister, grew older, he offered to build her tennis courts on the property; she declined. In the mid-seventies, my father unwittingly purchased the property on which he once shined shoes as a child. These stories, and others, signify a common thread among longshoremen that centers on the opportunities industry work has provided for them.

TT: So, how did you wind up buying the same property that you had been around as a child?

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<sup>21</sup> Taylor, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, 2014.

BT: I have no knowledge of how that happened. But, the *way* it happened... I was looking for a house for my mom... to move out of the projects. And, I went to a house on Lake Street, off of Nebraska Avenue. There was a house for sale, but the people didn't speak English; and I didn't speak Spanish. So, I went and got [my friend] Pete and asked if he would come up there and translate for me. He said, "For what?" I said, "Because I want to buy a house." He said, "How much they want for it?" And I told him. He said, "I know where you can buy three houses for that!" I said, "Well, let's go look at them!" So, we went, and he introduced me to the man. And, that still never hit me! It never hit me or dawned on me that these are the houses where I used to [go] on Sunday morning to shine shoes."<sup>23</sup>

My parents and I moved into one of the houses in the late seventies, after the aforementioned extended vacation in Georgia. But, in 1985, we moved again as a result of "the conditions." My father says, "We got out of there so you... didn't have to be in that environment."<sup>24</sup> And now, though he and my mother have lived in a relatively stable, mostly quiet neighborhood on the boarder of Seminole Heights for the past 30 years, he still aspires to something more, something better:

TT: So, [do] you ever think about moving again?

BT: All the time!

TT: Where would you go?

BT: I'd go [to a] high-rise! I would be right down... on Cass Street and Ashley

Drive... You can look over the water.

A view of the water—the same water that has fed his life and livelihood for nearly 70 years.

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, 2016.

## **A Reverie**

TT: So, let's think about it from way back... living on a farm in Georgia, to all the way forward, to here. [At] any time, did you ever think you'd be somewhere like [this]?

BT: You know, I never anticipated this. I never anticipated settling into [a stable environment]. But after your mom... things changed. My lifestyle changed. I had to think about getting somewhere and getting some stability...in my life. But, no. [I] never dreamed of this before it happened... never dreamed of it.”

TT: How does that make you feel?

BT: Good! Good. It makes me feel good...

TT: So, you've come a long way.

BT: Virginia Slims.

TT: You've come a long way, and brought a lot of people with you on that long journey, too.

BT: I tried! I tried, I tried, I tried. I think, when you do the best you can, that's all you can do—regardless of how people accept what you do or how they feel about what you do, you feel good within yourself knowing that you did what you could, and you tried to help somebody else come along with you from where you [were.]<sup>25</sup>

## **Conclusion**

My father's interviews document the inextricable linkage between longshoremen's work and non-work lives. Over the course of three, separate interviews, my father and I discussed a wide-range of both personal and professional topics, very few of which are reflected here. I recorded and transcribed hours of stories, reflections, and remembrances throughout which a

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, 2016.

common theme emerged—his varied life experiences within the context of his work as a longshoreman on the city of Tampa’s docks. It is not surprising that our dialogue radiated within the socially accepted paradigm of how dock workers are perceived in society; this pattern is observable in the scant twentieth-century literature available on the work and home lives of America’s longshoremen population. But, upon reviewing the interviews that I conducted in 2013 and 2014, a more interesting theme appeared—my own inability to uncouple my father from his work as a longshoreman. Even when I attempted to follow the “script,” our conversations would inevitably veer towards his work on the docks, and I would willingly follow. My weakness for not keeping us on track is also his Achilles heel; my ineffectiveness for separating my dad from his work stems from his own inability to do so. Our powerlessness in these situations was especially apparent during our most recent interview, conducted in 2016, in which the topic of family history and growing up in Tampa eventually found its way to work.

In “Locating Masculinity: Some Recent Works on Men,” Robert A. Nye suggests: “The most up-close view one can have of men enacting masculinity is through the sociolinguistic study of speech.”<sup>26</sup> Nye advances the notion of male speech patterns as a sort of gendered storytelling in which certain aspects of masculinity depend upon the participant’s or observer’s involvement in the story. He states, “Even if men stake out and perform masculinities at odds with the hegemonic masculinity of their own society, they must know the code in order to oppose it, and so they know, in a pinch, how to enact it.” In my father’s case, discussions about anything, including our family’s history, become peppered with references to his life as a longshoreman for three reasons—his ability to speak freely to “another longshoreman,”<sup>27</sup> the

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<sup>26</sup> Robert A. Nye, “Locating Masculinity: Some Recent Work on Men,” *Signs* 30.3 (Spring 2005): 1952, referencing Johnson and Meinhoff (1997), Holmes (1995), and Coates (2003).

<sup>27</sup> During a visit to the longshoremen’s union hall in Tampa, Florida, my father introduced me to a female longshoreman by stating, “She’s a second generation longshoreman, too.”

ability to converse in an environment in which the participant-observer (the interviewer) has extensive knowledge of the job, and his role as the masculine-male figure in our family. The stories he tells, the examples he shares, and the advice he gives hinge on his experiences as a member of ILA Local #1402 because he is allowed to do so. The framework within which his pattern of conversation is able to flow is created not by the class aesthetic he has achieved but by the job that allowed him to achieve it. Thus, his language is as defined by his work as a longshoreman as is his life. Even in retirement, his words reflect this ideal: “I’m a union man. I’m still a union man.”<sup>28</sup> He is a longshoreman, and will always be a longshoreman—in his view and society’s—regardless of social class status.

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor, 2016.

## CONCLUSION

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TT: What does it take to be a longshoreman?

BT: It takes physical strength to be a longshoreman, because the work [is] hard and under some of the worst conditions you would ever think could exist.

...

TT: How do you define masculinity?

BT: ... the strength that a person has.

TT: ... using your definition of masculinity, is that part of the job?

BT: Nope.

TT: Strength is not part of the job?

BT: Strength *is* the job.

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The longshoremen depicted in popular media are widely remembered as the hardened, masculine men of America's working class. While that perception persists in both fiction and real life, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that close readings of texts centered on longshoremen characters and produced during the post-World War II period reveal significant nuances in how the characters are depicted. Specifically, these portrayals suggest significant psychological tension in the longshoremen character's negotiation of socio-cultural and socio-economic identities as related to their masculine-male projections as men. In *A View from the*

*Bridge*, “Edge of the City,” and “On the Waterfront,” a range of masculine characteristics are portrayed that suggest the difficulties of working-class men to navigate paradigmatic shifts in culture, class, and definitions of male masculinity. From the hypermasculine affect of men threatened by progress to the conflicts of masculine identity performance to expressions of mature manhood, these works demonstrate how projections of male masculinity can be read as a response to the changing socio-cultural mores of the nineteen-fifties, particularly as the characteristics constituting masculinity evolved within the emerging middle-class frame. Interestingly, many of these portrayals can be summarized by a sincere, albeit passing, reference to the longshoremen’s inherent vulnerability as men during this transitional period: “He tries to act tough, but there is a look in his eye.”<sup>1</sup>

In popular culture, there is “a look” in all longshoremen’s eyes that extends from the psychological tensions their characters’ attempt to negotiate in response to their identities as masculine men. Constructing portrayals of longshoremen within preexisting paradigms of male masculinity continued as the cultural narratives surrounding class, economics, and performance were reconsidered. However, closer examinations of these characters reveals both a fluidity of performance as well as a conflict of this negotiation. Between the fluidity and the conflict can be read society’s attempt to retain certain pre-World War II constructs of working-class masculinity by depicting America’s “manliest” men within the confines of the occupations that reinforced their masculine manhood.

Depictions of longshoremen reinforce pre-war ideals of masculinity in interesting ways. On the one hand, the characters’ masculine affect is lauded: longshoremen are strong, capable, hard-working, family-oriented men who use their physical strength to fight for social justice and

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<sup>1</sup> “On the Waterfront,” Edie Doyle in reference to Terry Malloy.

worker's rights. On the other hand, the longshoremen's masculinity can be read as a flawed group characteristic that hinders social mobility; the longshoremen's working-class occupation and social class standing will always be the most influential aspect of their (in)ability to manage psychological tension, regardless of how middle-class ideology impacts their everyday lives. In essence, these texts suggest that the longshoremen's masculine affect is acceptable as long as working-class lifestyles and ideologies are maintained, but that once working-class men begin accepting middle-class values, they must move away from overt displays of masculinity as a way to overcome inherent class boundaries. In effect, these texts suggest that working-class men *deserved* their social status because they limited their own potential for traversing socio-economic boundaries as a direct result of their inability to transcend outmoded socio-cultural norms. Their portrayals serve as a warning against overt displays of masculinity as newer models of manhood emerged during this period. Thus, the longshoremen's identities—and our remembrance of their identity performances—become intertwined with sociocultural expectations surrounding their livelihood. Unpacking the complicated relationship of male masculinity, middle-class aesthetics, and working-class values makes it possible to undo these constructions and reconsider the longshoremen's negotiation of the changing socio-cultural mid-century world.



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