

ENGLISH: *ON THE WATERFRONT*

'On the Waterfront shows that being true to oneself is more important than being loyal to one's friends.' Discuss.

Elia Kazan's film, *On the Waterfront* clearly conveys that being true to oneself is more important than being loyal to one's friends. The classic black and white documentary-style film reveals to viewers that life on the 'fattest harbour in the world' in the 1950's on Hoboken, New Jersey is fraught with indignity and uncertainty. The protagonist, Terry Malloy proceeds in a slow transformation throughout the film from a failed prizefighter into the 'contender he always thought he could' be. Alongside the affection and guidance exemplified by Edie Doyle and Father Barry, Terry is able to find moral stability and a sense of self in order to testify. However, it is Terry's loyalties with the mob and Johnny Friendly that prevent him from having a sense of moral righteousness. Furthermore, Charley proves that being true to oneself is more important than being loyal to one's friends as he proves to be the ultimate sacrifice to stay loyal and true to himself. It is through the use of various cinematic techniques and film noir of light and dark, that viewers are able to explore and delve into Terry's emotional and moral struggle between being true to oneself and being loyal to one's friends.

Throughout the film, Terry undergoes a slow transformation from remaining 'D 'n' D' and keeping silent about the corruption that surrounds him, to becoming a 'stool pigeon', testifying against the criminally corrupt union officials, and in doing so, risking the acceptance of the men on the waterfront. Adopting a documentary style approach while shooting in the docks of Hoboken, New Jersey, the film powerfully conveys the harsh lives of those attempting to survive in the face of poverty, powerlessness and exploitation. Terry is neither part of the longshoremen or the mob, as he states that '[he] is with [him]', which further positions viewers to sympathize for his state of uncertainty. Kazan uses smoke and mist to express the mood of uncertainty that Terry feels towards the decisions he has to make in order "for honest men to work the dock with job security and peace of mind". Through the influence of other characters, Terry develops moral stability to testify against those that immoral and authoritative.

Edie Doyle is the moral touchstone of the film as she demonstrates to Terry that being true to oneself is important and thus becomes the catalyst for his transformation. The viewer's initial interpretation of Edie is that she is innocent and an outcast in the world of the docks, in which she has spent little time. Kazan uses illuminating light and close-up shots of her face and blonde halo of hair, to highlight her goodness she prevails within characters such as Father Barry and Terry. Scenes that feature both Terry and Edie are the key pivotal scenes where Terry's character not only grows morally, but also where Terry begins to experience love and affection, which motivates him to be altruistic and to do "the right thing". Throughout the film, Edie's philosophy of "shouldn't everybody care about everybody else?" is portrayed by her determination to know the truth of "who killed [her] brother". In juxtaposition, Terry's philosophy is to "do it to him before he does it to you" in which Edie views as "living like an animal". Edie is evidently a good example of one that is true to oneself as she acknowledges her conscience of seeing things that "are so wrong". After Edie's acknowledgement, the music further intensifies into the next frame to create a sense of tension in what is to come; in that Terry will stand up for what he thinks is right.

Father Barry also plays a key role in Terry's transformation as a spiritual and paternal figure that has articulate moral principles, in which leads Terry to his ultimate decision. At the beginning of the film, Father Barry is inevitably influenced by Edie to take action for "[his] parish" after she questioned, "who ever heard of a saint hiding in a church?" Father Barry's activism in the longshoremen's lives is clearly evident as he is willing to take the church to the dockworkers rather than wait for them to come to him. However, he does not understand the loyalty the group holds that, "no matter how much [they] hate the torpedoes, [they] don't rat." Instead of abiding to the code of "D & D" he urges the men to testify, "for what you know is right against what you know is wrong". His ability to stay true to himself and also stay loyal to his friends – the longshoremen is demonstrated in the "sermon

in the hold scene". Although his "promise" to K.O Dugan was not fulfilled, the viewers are positioned to feel a sense of sympathy towards Father Barry. The camera angle position looks down on Father Barry as he is crouched down, feeling the burdening guilt of Dugan's death. Kazan uses film noir of dark shadows, throughout the frame to demonstrate the entrapment the longshoremen face and little opportunities they have. As the scene progresses, Father Barry's famous speech "it's a crucifixion", triggers Terry's consciousness as he begins to realize the whole situation for what it is, and the effects of him remaining silent about the corruption on the waterfront. Father Barry is evidently a strong moral character as from start to end as; he is willing to "stand up" along anyone that is willing to testify for the better of the community.

However, Terry's ability to be true to himself is prevented by his loyalties to Johnny Friendly and Charley. Throughout most part of the film, Terry appears to be caught in a division of loyalties as he is emotionally and morally tied to Johnny Friendly and Charley, his brother. In the opening shots, Terry cuts a troubled figure when he is issued with instructions from Friendly. His awkward body language of hunched shoulders and a defensive hand inside his jacket further suggests his position within the mob. The use of costuming also shows a clear divided line, symbolically, as to where Terry stands. His ordinary clothes similar to the other longshoremen opposed to Friendly and the other gang member's expensive leather coats clearly depicts that Terry already considered himself as one of the longshoremen, but rather, was still involved with Friendly only because of the mutual connection with Charlie and felt obligated to. Although he stands out, Terry is affectionately patronized by Friendly who calls him 'slugger' and 'kid'. At times, Friendly is protective of Terry, but can also easily manipulate him by buying Terry's silence about Joey Doyle's death with money and the offer of a "cushy job in the loft". It is through the demeaning gestures that Terry begins to realize that false loyalties have prevented him from developing good moral principles.

Charley demonstrates that being true to oneself is more important than being loyal to one's friends as he makes the ultimate sacrifice to stay loyal and true to himself and Terry. The movie's most famous scene, the cab scene between Charley and Terry pinpoints the pinnacle of Terry's emotional struggle as he reveals his honest feelings to his brother. The lines that are wrenched out of an agonised Terry as he begs his brother to accept responsibility for destroying his dreams: "I coulda been a contender; I coulda been somebody" displays the courage that Terry has finally been able to develop. The use of medium close-up shots from various angles emphasizes both Charlie and Terry's emotions during each moment and how both are struggling, as this is a very confronting scene for both brothers. Both captivating and emotional as the orchestral music plays in the background sealing the final moments of these two brothers together a scene of personal depth with many close up shots and the close proximity that they share shows the strong bond between the two that not even Johnny Friendly and the corruption on the waterfront can't come between. A most significant scene in its own right, marks a change in not only Terry's emotional and moral struggles, but also for Charlie as he takes responsibility and lets Terry go.

All of Terry's struggles throughout the film show the progression and growth of his character, which inevitably leads him to breaking the code of "D & D", to confess the types of corruption that occurs on the waterfront. Despite knowing what the consequences would be, he takes it upon himself the motivation of Charlie's death, to put an end to Friendly once and for all. His final and most heroic moment is in the final scene on the docks, where he's emotionally defeated as he's out-casted by all for being a "canary", physically struggles to pick himself up after being beat up by Friendly and his gang, he takes his final steps towards the ships docking area, the journey of Terry's emotional and moral struggles conclude as the doors shut, marking a small change that one man, Terry Malloy, helped influence by staying true to himself and sacrificing loyalties. Terry's blurred vision is also a reminder that the way forward is far from clear as the imposing form of the ship-owner counters the possibility that the power has shifted in the longshoremen's favor. It through the influences of Edie Doyle and Father Barry that lead Terry in the journey to redemption and show him that loyalties aren't as important as being true to yourself.