

**TRAGIC CHARACTERISTICS IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*
AND MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN***

(Master's Thesis)

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/ /2005

ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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Tragic Characteristics in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Miller's Death of a Salesman

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ÖZET

Bu tez William Shakespeare'in *Hamlet*, *Danimarka Prensi* ve Arthur Miller'in *Satıcının Ölümü* adlı eserlerindeki temel trajik özellikleri ve bu özelliklerin trajik evrimini ele alan karşılaştırmalı bir araştırmadır. Bu tez aynı zamanda trajedi üzerine onun farklı boyutlarıyla kapsamlı bir analizdir. Bir edebi tür olan trajedinin tarihsel sürecinde Kraliçe Elizabeth dönemi ve modern dönemin muazzam temsilcileri olarak bu tezde temel alınan iki önemli trajik oyunun analizi bir trajik evrim temelindeki yönün kavranmasını sağlar. Bu tezin odak noktası bu oyunları tarihsel süreç içerisinde en dikkate değer trajedi örneklerinden ikisi yapan özgünlüklerini ortaya koymaktır. Aynı zamanda, William Shakespeare ve Arthur Miller trajediye yaptıkları temel katkılarıyla iki ölümsüz oyun yazarı olarak bu tezde odaklanılmaktadırlar. Kraliçe Elizabeth dönemini trajedisinin çoğunlukla doğaüstü öğelerle, tanrısallıkla ve üst sınıfa mensup karakterlerin ilişkileriyle ilgilenmesine karşın, modern trajedi çoğunlukla ekonomik sorunlar gibi hayatın gerçekçi taraflarıyla, sıradan bir insan üzerinde iş dünyasında başarılı olması için dayatılan sosyal baskıyla ve orta sınıfa mensup sıradan karakterlerin ailesel bir perspektif içindeki basit ilişkileriyle ilgilenmektedir. Kısaca, bu özellik bu tezin bütün araştırmasından diğer özelliklerin arasında Kraliçe Elizabeth dönemi trajedisi ve modern trajedi arasındaki en göze çarpan trajik evrim olarak anlaşılmaktadır.

Tragic Characteristics in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Miller's Death of a Salesman

Ali Özgün ÖZDEMİR

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in the context of their basic tragic characteristics and tragic evolution of these characteristics. It is also a comprehensive analysis on tragedy with its different dimensions. The analysis of two significant tragic plays, which are based on in this thesis as monumental representatives of the Elizabethan and modern periods in the historical background of tragedy as a literary form, enables to recognise the way on the basis of a tragic evolution. The focus of this study is the originality of these two tragic plays which makes them two of the most remarkable examples of tragedy during the time. At the same time, William Shakespeare and Arthur Miller are focused as the two immoral playwrights with their basic contributions to tragedy in this thesis. While the Elizabethan tragedy mainly concerned with supernatural elements, divinity and relationships of members from upper class, the modern tragedy mainly concerned with realistic aspects of the life like economic crisis, social pressure on a common man to be successful in the business life and simple relationships of common people from middle class within a familial perspective. Briefly, this characteristic is essentially inferred from the whole discussion of this thesis among others as the most striking tragic evolution between the Elizabethan and modern tragedy.

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INTRODUCTION

Tragedy is the most favoured dramatic form. It firstly emerged in ancient Greece and then tragedians of the Elizabethan age followed it in England of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Finally, tragedy found an expression in American drama of twentieth century. Tragedy had a religious characteristic in ancient Greece and England of the Elizabethan age but then it changed into a secular characteristic in American drama of twentieth century. By this way, tragedy reached to earthly matters out of the church in modern time. The main characteristics of tragedy in its form and content changed completely from Shakespeare's period in England to Arthur Miller's period in America. The present thesis focuses on change of tragic characteristics in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. This study aims at showing the differences between two different tragedies of two different ages.

One of the most important tragic characteristics is suffering of a hero in tragedy. The famous German literary critic Friedrich Schiller maintains that tragedy is in an obligation to represent 'suffering nature' but he goes on to say that tragedy should also show the moral resistance against suffering. For him, representation of mere suffering cannot be aim of art. Schiller states that: "The ultimate aim of art is to represent the super sensuous, and tragic art in particular achieves this by making sensuous the moral independence of man from the laws of nature in a state of passion" (METU, 1985: 160).

Schopenhauer, as another respectable critic, insists that spectators are attracted in tragedy by the excess of evil doing, the misery itself. He also claims that spectators are not interested in ordinary events of life and look for something more which desire can only be satisfied by catastrophe. He, in a sense, summarises the chief theme of tragedy:

.... In tragedy we are confronted with the terrible side of life, misery of mankind, the dominion of accident and error, the fall of the just man, the

triumph of the wicked: thus the condition of the world that is downright repugnant to our will, is brought before our eyes (METU, 1985: 161)

Tragedy reflects sad events and realities of life to the spectators and they mostly impress from tragedy because they find their tragic lives in it. Arthur Miller, who is the major American playwright of twentieth century, presents his deep knowledge on tragedy in his monumental essay *Tragedy and Common Man*. He maintains that a few tragedies are written in the traditional respect in modern time. He mostly depends on this decline in modern tragedies to lack of heroic capacity and stature among modern societies. According to Miller, tragic flaw in a character is indeed meaningless but it is his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the point of what he perceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status. He claims that only passive characters, who do not act to challenge against their weak personalities, are “flawless” as most people are so.

Arthur Miller talks about his one of the most important contributions to modern tragedy: “I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were” (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 148). His words emphasise that the rank is not important in tragedy. I affirm from his words that if rank was inevitable in tragedy, then problems of tragedy would be caused from the rank and these problems would be particular problems of tragedy. Arthur Miller concludes his thoughts with such an effective indication that whole problem and reason for existence of tragedy from ancient Greek to modern time may be obviously resolved.:

As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his “rightful” position in his society. [...] Tragedy, then, is the consequence of a man’s total compulsion to evaluate himself justly. (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 148-149)

Tragedy is simply caused from a necessity of a man to have a rightful position in his society. If the man rejects to remain passive and revolts against imperative forces, then a tragic atmosphere is created to prepare his tragic battle with these supreme powers which will be resulted probably with his tragic end in the means of destruction and death.

William Shakespeare is a respectable playwright who made a visible progress in tragedy as the foremost playwright of the Elizabethan age. The famous French painter Eugene Delacroix expressed frankly his admiration of Shakespeare as a playwright: “No words are strong enough to express one’s admiration for the genius of Shakespeare” (Shakespeare, 1976: 9). *Hamlet* is one of the most important tragic plays of Shakespeare which is also a milestone in his career. This play is not only important in English literature but it also is a generally appreciated play as a traditional tragedy by whole literary world.

John Cowper Powys, as a critic, attaches importance to bitter structure of the play on a single individual as an alternative point of view: “*Hamlet* is a subjective tragedy, the whole poignance of which—with Ophelia as its victim—depends on the character of the protagonist” (1946, 310). Powys evaluates the play as the individual tragedy of Hamlet. Despite dominant figure of Hamlet in this tragedy, other minor tragedies like Ophelia’s, Laertes’, and even King Claudius’ tragedies should not be ignored. The problem and dilemma of Hamlet, which constitute the main tragic atmosphere of the play, do not prevent audience from recognising other individual tragedies. These tragedies are presented by playwright skillfully in the background of the play. The play has an extensive variety of subjects that a large amount of spectators are pleased to watch it eagerly.

.... The enormous length of the play is diversified by the most varied, and, at times, most exciting, action. In the common phrase there is something for everyone—the fight or almost fight in the churchyard, the duel, the final slaughter scene (simply an exciting moment the mere vulgar)—the pity of all these things for the sentimental, the poetry of them for those who can appreciate it. And, above all, and with all, there is the supreme interest of the character

presentment, which informs and transforms the incidents, and which, not merely in the central figure, is the richest and most full to be found in Shakespeare (Ward&Waller, ed., 1966: 200)

Shakespeare realises depths of humanity in a closer respect to modern understanding but he also writes drama rather than psychology. Tragedy has changed from high to low tragedy, or from traditional to psychological tragedy because of some trends like realism, naturalism and expressionism which appeared in modern time. Arthur Miller, as a pioneer playwright, changed the conventions of the Elizabethan tragedy and created his original, modern tragic style that is respected by literary world through his usage of realism and social matters in his plays.

A very respectable dramatic critic John Gassner points out that realism as a modern trend enlarged individual aspect of tragedy besides its social concern and challenged conventional beliefs of high tragedy within a psychological perspective. He puts emphasis on influence of realism and expressionism of famous Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen on Arthur Miller:

.... The morally responsible individual's potentialities and defects are the paramount subject of Ibsenism; and that this is the case is still understood by a latter-day Ibsen disciple such as Arthur Miller, although his ambivalence is obvious when he fails to make up his mind in *Death of a Salesman* whether Willy Loman or society is responsible for Loman's failure (1968, 654)

John Gassner's words clearly show the influence of "Ibsenism" which combines realistic and expressionist technics on Miller. This influence is obviously seen in his major play *Death of a Salesman*. Tragedy and hard times of Willy Loman are represented by the playwright through usage of realist and expressionist implications such as Willy's daydreams, his failure in his duties of fatherhood and being a salesman; or Biff's recognition of his failure and his authentic self in the play. Miller represents to audience that society is also guilty in Willy's and all Lomans' downfall. For this reason, he has audiences confront with themselves and share their guilts consciously.

Miller has a possible failure to determine whether Willy, or society is responsible for existing failure of the play that creates the tragic aspect. Miller criticises American society, social institutions and values in this play. He gives the message that society is responsible in Willy Loman's tragic end with its wrong values of success but readers also find a strong theme of love among family members. Willy does not commit suicide at the end of the play because of social pressure on himself. However, he commits suicide for the sake of his older son Biff and his family. Thus, I consider that even though Miller attacks to society and its destructive pressure on a low-man, he depends on Willy's death to familial values. For this reason, there is an ambiguity in Miller's message about whether Willy, or society is responsible for his failure and tragic end in the play.

An American critic Richard Zoglin refers to Miller's social aspect as a playwright and his usage of experimentalism as the natural result of his being a realist dramatist. Zoglin briefly maintains that: "Miller was a social realist, yet, it's easy to forget that *Death of a Salesman* was also an experimental work, with its fluid leaps in time as Willy drifts into memories of his sons as teenagers and of his idolized brother Ben" (1999, 2). Zoglin frankly attaches importance to daydreams of Willy between past and present that are used by the playwright to reflect inner life of Willy as Shakespeare used soliloquies with same intention. Miller's usage of daydreams of Willy between past and present to show his inner state to audience causes because he influenced from expressionism and realism as popular trends of modern time.

Harold Clurman, who is a literary critic, analyses tragic life of Willy Loman. Clurman represents general tragic aspect of the play with his description of Willy's life in tragic view. Clurman summarises the play as the individual tragedy of Willy Loman that negatively effects his family, too and also directs his family to a miserable end like tragic end of him:

Willy Loman believes wholeheartedly in the operative ideal of his fellow countrymen. Being a kindly man, he speaks not of success so much as of being

“well liked.” [...] He has forsworn his modest gift for carpentry to become a salesman because it promises a brighter future of ease and affluence. By turning away from himself he becomes an utterly confused person. He is now only a half man, a blind man, always in contradiction to himself, even to the smallest details of his existence. He dreams the American legend—the brother who walked into the jungle and when he was twenty-one came out of it rich. [...] He has misplaced and can no longer recognize his own reality. [...] Unaware of what warped his mind and behaviour, he commits suicide in the conviction that a legacy of twenty thousand dollars is all that is needed to save his beloved but almost equally damaged offspring. This may not be “tragic,” but such distorted thinking maims a very great number of folk in the world today. (1977, 15)

Clurman focuses on the destructive effect of “American Dream” on Willy Loman which constitutes one of tragic atmospheres of this play. At the same time, his view is clear that whether this belief and its leading to a destruction of Willy is tragic, or not, this belief of materialistic success has also become lifestyle of the ordinary men and wasted their lives like the life of Willy as a member of modern society nowadays. Tragic characteristics and values have changed throughout the time in some degrees as a result of the changes of social characteristics and values.

First chapter of this thesis deals with tragedy in its every particular aspect. Definition of tragedy will be presented to inform the reader what tragedy is. Then tragic characteristics will be stated to evaluate tragedy comprehensively and discuss changes of it throughout the time from the Elizabethan age to modern. Some important sources will be used in the discussion of tragic characteristics. First book is Northrop Frye’s famous work *Anatomy of Criticism* that is a total guide to study on tragedy. Tragic form is evaluated through this work as a form. Second book is Robert W. Corrigan’s *Tragedy, Vision and Form*. This book is used as a chief source to determine tragic characteristics and evaluate their changes.

Second chapter analyses Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan tragedy. Shakespeare’s life will be stated briefly within a few paragraphs. *Hamlet* will be

analysed with its all tragic characteristics to represent to reader characteristics of an Elizabethan tragedy. Two very important sources will be used in this chapter. First source is the book *Hamlet* which is edited by Martin Coyle. This book is used to refer to tragedy of the play with its different tragic dimensions. Second source is A. D. Cousins' article "Shakespeare's Hamlet." This article provides a different point of view on Hamlet as a tragic hero and it studies inner thoughts of him. This chapter presents an opportunity to readers to have knowledge about the Elizabethan tragedy before they understand well changes of modern tragedy.

Third and last chapter focuses on Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy. Arthur Miller's life will be presented briefly in a few paragraphs. *Death of a Salesman* will be studied comprehensively with its tragic characteristics in order to represent modern tragic characteristics to reader. Finally, tragic characteristics in *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan play and *Death of a Salesman* as a modern play will be compared with each other. Naturally, a direct comparison of these characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy is not possible but they will be compared generally as far as such a comparison is possible.

Two remarkable sources will be used in this chapter. First source is Leonard Moss' book *Arthur Miller*. This book is used to represent the tragic relationship between a father Willy and his older son Biff. Second source is Terry Otten's article "'*Death of a Salesman*' at fifty—still 'coming home to roost.'" This article shows major changes in the means of an evolution in tragic characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern throughout the time. This chapter represents the validity of whole discussion of this thesis in the context of tragic characteristics and proves its claims which are based on a possible evolution in tragic characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern with its last comparative part. To conclude, it must be said that this thesis studies on a tragic evolution as a different process from an Elizabethan tragedy to a modern one in two different plays in relation to historical aspect for tragic view.

CHAPTER ONE
TRAGEDY AND TRAGIC CHARACTERISTICS

1.1.The Rise of Tragedy in Ancient Greece

Theatre started to sanctify Dionysus who was god of wine in ancient Greece. The plays were performed for only divine purposes and theatre was as divine as a temple for ancient Greeks. The chorus of men were used to sing hymns for praising gods in festivals for Dionysus. Prime time of ancient Greeks started with Aeschylus' tragedies (525–456 B.C.). These tragedies were written by him in the form of a trilogy. However, each play of this trilogy was a whole itself, it had same subject with other two plays.

The problem of qualification of tragedy was considered only studying on its source for a long time. Beginning with Aristotle it was thought that tragedy appeared from lyrical tunes of chorus in festivals for Dionysus but recently specialists and anthropologists of ancient Greek civilization regarded tragedy as an extension of burial ceremonies and legends about agriculture in a different respect. In this respect, a Turkish author and literary critic Turan Oflazoğlu has an informative view about roots of tragedy:

The dynamism of every age is formed with the reaction that is shown against main and settled values of the previous age. And during this struggle many things that are taken from past that these then become an equipment for reconstruction of new. The trend of scepticism, which began with some philosophers such as Bruno, Erasmus, Montaigne and Machiavelli, awakes subdued and even frozen potential of medieval age, stands with wonder against static beliefs, which are transformed through generations, and these fights cause tensions. In this way, an extremely proper atmosphere is created for tragedy to begin to develop (1999, 20)

Ancient Greek tragedy reached a technical perfection with Sophocles' plays (496–406 B.C.). His tragedies had a unique balance and beauty. This important characteristic of his tragedies separated him from other tragedians of ancient Greece. His tragedies were defined as masterpieces in poetic respect. Sophocles was the first

playwright who used setting in his plays. Many tragedians influenced from his tragic style in the following eras including Shakespeare and Miller. This study primarily aims at studying on tragedy comprehensively by discussing changes of main tragic characteristics through an analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Third important ancient Greek tragedian was Euripides (484–406 B.C.). Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides wrote plays that were based on Greek mythology. These playwrights influenced from Aristotle's principles on tragedy:

These three playwrights then wrote plays convenient to the rules determined by Aristotle in his book "Poetics." One of these rules was unity in time, setting and action that's why the rule which a line of events take place in same setting and one day or to form series of relevant events was valid (Temel Britannica, 1993: 211)

This chapter deals with tragedy with its characteristics and their evolution throughout the time from the Elizabethan to modern by focusing on *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan sample and *Death of a Salesman* as a modern one. Ancient Greek tragedy will be stated mostly when it is needed because there is a strong potential to influence from ancient Greek tragedies both in the Elizabethan and modern tragedies. Firstly, ancient Greek, the Elizabethan and twentieth century American tragedy will be discussed briefly as three different prime times of tragedy in historical tragic development. Then in second section of this chapter tragedy will be discussed with its main characteristics. Third section of this chapter deals with the change of tragic characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy generally without referring to two mainly-focused plays of this thesis.

1.1.1 Tragedy in England of The Elizabethan Age

Tragedy showed a great revival with Renaissance while it was limited in former ages. The age of Queen Elizabeth was the prime and most prolific age of English literature especially in the field of theatre. Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare were the most important playwrights of this time. Marlowe's most famous

tragic play was *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. This play is shortly the story of a doctor who sells his soul to Satan to have power and knowledge. *The Famous Tragedy of The Rich Jew of Malta*, which deals with the desire of wealthiness, is Marlowe's another major work.

William Shakespeare was the greatest playwright of theatre in Elizabethan age. He influenced from Marlowe and Marlowe's clear effects on him were seen in Shakespeare's early works. Shakespeare left his mark on the Elizabethan theatre. His plays researched the nature of human beings with an incredible wisdom, besides their extraordinary poetic quality and imagination. Ben Jonson, who was a contemporary playwright of Shakespeare's period, stated after his death: "He was not of an age, but for all time" (Bardweb, 2004).

1.1.2. Tragedy in The Twentieth Century American Drama

American Drama went towards realism in twentieth century. Eugene O'Neill was one of the greatest playwrights of American drama. He affected dramatic art totally in America. Some of his plays are based on psychological observations in 1920s. O'Neill's major works are *Strange Interlude* (1928) and *A long Day's Journey into Night* (1956).

Tennessee Williams with his plays *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), and Arthur Miller with his plays *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953) are the foremost playwrights after World War II. Arthur Miller combined realistic characters and a social agenda while was also writing modern tragedy. This is most notably seen in *Death of a Salesman* which is a tale of the life and death of the ordinary working man Willy Loman. American playwrights were under the influence of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and his view of psychological realism in twentieth century. British plays were copied by most American playwrights until the early twentieth century. For this reason, some critics claim that American drama was not born until the end of World War I:

American drama has only gained popularity and prominence in the twentieth century when dramatists such as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller began writing about the predicament of modern humanity in a complex, pluralistic society. (Geocities, 2004)

Realism continued as a primary form of dramatic expression through the major playwrights such as Williams, Miller and O'Neill in twentieth century American drama. At this point, it is very useful to summarise this period:

Such renowned American playwrights as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller reached profound new levels of psychological realism, commenting through individual characters and their situations on the state of American society in general. As the century progressed, the most powerful drama spoke to broad social issues such as civil rights and the aids crisis and the individual's position in relation to those issues. Individual perspectives in mainstream theatre became far more diverse and more closely reflected the increasingly complex demographics of American society. (Encarta, 2004)

1.2.Tragedy : A Dramatic Art

Tragedy basically contains an event, or a tale that tells about sufferings of human beings and ends unhappily so mostly with death in its larger sense. As a literary term, it means a kind of theatrical art that appeared and developed in religious ceremonies of ancient Greece. Tragedy is also described in the form of an encyclopedic definition:

Tragedy is a theatrical play which is based on a myth or history and aims at arising pity and horror on audience by by putting important characters on the stage and revealing human beings' passions with their destructions and disasters as the inevitable results of these passions (Dictionnaire Larousse, 1993: 2343)

The aim of Greek tragedians was not to arrange a show in a contemporary meaning. These tragedies were based on myths in relation to gods and heroes which were known by everyone. Playwrights showed new explanations to myths and let people understand well laws of god and state. Tragedy is based on the belief that people are free for choices which will effect their fates. This choice is generally between religious laws and social rules in a play that is written in tragic form. Tragedy appears when a flaw in personality of a man forces him to make a wrong choice. This wrong choice results with suffering and death of the hero. A famous ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose determinations on tragedy formed essentials of ancient Greek tragedy, was the first person who defined tragedy:

Tragedy is a representation, an imitation of an action, which is serious, complete in itself, and of a certain length; it is expressed in speech mode beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted, not narrated; and by exciting pity and fear it gives a healthy relief to such emotions (Lucas, 1957: 24)

Thus, I infer from Aristotle's definition that he states in due logical order, first, what tragedy is and represents; secondly, the form it employs; thirdly, the manner in which it is communicated; and, lastly, the function it fulfills. Aristotle puts forward that the line of events in tragedy is more important than characters. According to him, tragedy has a great purpose. This purpose is not to show suffering of a hero but to make spectators know their identities by living feelings of fear and pity.

Tragedy does not form itself in the place where a belief is dominated, besides it existence of a suspicion that prevents the belief is necessary. Nevertheless, it is not proper for tragedy when only a suspicion is dominated. For instance, Jesus Christ is not tragic when he trusts in god to help him in every difficulty but when Jesus Christ sees that no one helps him as he is crucified and he screams that "why did you leave me? my god!" This means that he passed into a tragic dimension. Tragedy need not end in disaster for Greeks. It must include scenes of pain and sorrow but it need not close with

one though it usually did. The essence of tragedy was that it handled serious actions of serious characters.

Tragedy at first had a religious characteristic unlike its narrow terminological meaning; the term of tragedy consists of theatre performances which seem as different from Aeschylus to Voltaire but it also has common points. The evolution of tragic form continued with intervals and its prime times surprisingly lasted short. A French literary critic Rene Girard explains his determination about central points of tragedy which is mainly about the role of violence in tragedy:

The remarkable aspect of tragedy is the contradiction of symmetric elements. The presentation of a violence, which may cause danger for people as a show or tragic struggle, is a special fight style in which sword changes its place to word. People reflect a violence special to them outside. They think that god wants a sacrifice and then they start to believe in this thought. Tragic hero blindly submits himself to a destiny which is formed to confirm an end predetermined before (Dictionnaire Larousse, 1993: 2344)

At the Renaissance the word's connection with drama revived; but its association with a sad ending has remained. Thus, "tragedy" has three meanings:

1. ancient – serious drama;
2. medieval – a story with unhappy ending;
3. modern – a drama with unhappy ending (it is disastrous enough for audience to feel it "tragic")

The essence of tragedy is more comprehensive than it was mentioned before in this chapter. This essence is generally a hero's being against an entirety. The entirety may be a crowd of people, a social structure, world or even a thought in the form of an obsession. Tragic hero has to suffer and this suffering is also a test for him. Results of such unexpected situations are almost arranged as rules of a ceremony with a total care and an exposition of a hero. To sum up, problem of tragedy lies in the explanation that how such a special problem reappear mutually in certain periods and far civilizations

which have different social, political and economic structures. The answer of this problem was researched in two different directions. Firstly, it was researched before the history of human thought and with the occurrence of revealing new social structures. Secondly, the answer was researched in transformations which were determined historically.

Tragic point of view changes among societies and fights that reflect tragic aspects are evaluated from one age to another one. However, tragedy originates from same myths in every period and this aspect gives to tragedy a universal quality despite its entire characteristic. A fight occurs under consideration many times between a man and religious principles, and this fight provides the man to be in a conversation with himself and things beyond himself. Sometimes, the tragic makes audience think situations end with death and people who are sacrificed. But tragedy is mainly humanist and it also means the hope of a man who stands upright against the universe, challenges to this world, in which he has difficulty to understand, or defies to divine justice, opposes to laws of the state and supposes himself as stronger than he is indeed from time to time.

Tragedy has four “prime times” in western theatrical art. First prime time of tragedy was in ancient Greece, in fifth century B.C. Second prime time was in England and Spain, in sixteenth century. Playwrights of this time aimed at showing how suffering developed personality of man. Shakespeare and Marlowe in England, and Calderon and Lope de Vega in Spain revived tragedy strongly in this time after ancient Greek tragedians. Third greatest age of tragedy was in France, in seventeenth century. Tragedians of this age chiefly Corneille and Racine influenced from ancient Greek tragedies in their plays. These tragedies were particularly about love and honour since most of them dealt with dilemma of the hero between love and honour. Fourth important time for tragedy was in Europe and America between the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century. Unfortunately, no tragic play has been written as proper to traditional models from ancient time to nowadays and any studies on this area have not reached beyond dramatic perspective.

1.3.Principal Elements of Tragedy

Tragedy is generally a dramatic genre that evokes pity and terror in audience as it deals with serious themes and dignified characters. Development of a conflict between a protagonist and a superior force, which is fate, circumstance or society, is typically described in tragedy. Tragedy also reaches a sorrowful, disastrous or violent conclusion with death of one or more principal characters. As society becomes increasingly middle class in modern tragedy, domestic tragedy has appeared as a new kind of tragedy. Domestic tragedy emphasises tragic protagonists from lower or middle class with their downfalls and there is a personal familial affair rather than an affair of the state in this kind of tragedy. In this respect, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a traditional Elizabethan tragedy and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is a modern domestic tragedy.

The famous English author and literary critic Northrop Frye analyses tragedy deeply and indicates about tragedy that it is the fiction of fall of leader. He explains why tragic hero falls: "He has to fall because that is the only way in which a leader can be isolated from his society" (1957, 37). For Frye, tragic hero has to be of a properly heroic size but his fall is involved both with a sense of his relation to society and a sense of supremacy of natural law both of which are ironic in reference.

Frye argues that central position of high mimetic tragedy in five tragic modes, balanced between godlike heroism and all-too-human irony, is expressed in traditional conception of catharsis. Two words –pity and fear– may be taken as referring to two general directions in which emotion moves whether towards an object or away from it. Frye also maintains that in high mimetic tragedy pity and fear become, respectively, favourable and contrary to moral judgement which are relevant to tragedy but not central to it:

The particular thing that called tragedy that happens to the tragic hero does not depend on his moral status. If it is causally related to something he has done, as it generally is, the tragedy is in the inevitability of the consequences of the act,

not in its moral significance as an act. Hence the paradox that in tragedy pity and fear are raised and cast out. Aristotle's hamartia or "flaw," therefore, is not necessarily wrongdoing, much less moral weakness: it may be simply a matter of being a strong character in an exposed position. The exposed position is usually the place of leadership, in which a character is exceptional and isolated at the same time, giving the audience that curious blend of the inevitable, and the incongruous which is peculiar to tragedy. The principle of the hamartia of leadership can be more clearly seen in naive high mimetic tragedy (1957, 38)

On the contrary, in low mimetic tragedy, pity and fear are neither purged nor absorbed into pleasures but are communicated externally as sensations. According to Frye, the best word for low mimetic or domestic tragedy is, perhaps, *pathos* and *pathos* presents its hero as isolated by a weakness which appeals to the spectators' sympathy because it is on their level of experience. Frye also focuses on irony as a tragic mode. He points out that tragedy in a high mimetic sense mingles the tragic with ironic and maintains: "Irony, as a mode, is born from the low mimetic; it takes life exactly as it finds it" (1957, 41). He naturally regards irony as a sophisticated mode and the chief difference between sophisticated and naive irony is that the naive ironist calls attention to the fact that he is being ironic, whereas the sophisticated irony merely states and lets the reader add the ironic tone himself.

Frye states that tragic irony, then, becomes simply the study of tragic isolation as such and it thereby drops out the element of special case which in some degree is in all the other modes. Its hero does not have to have any tragic hamartia or pathetic obsession. He is only somebody who gets isolated from his society. Thus, he refers to the central principle of tragic irony to conclude his own discussion on this issue by saying that whatever exceptional happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character.

The sense of authentic natural basis of human character comes into literature through Greek tragedies. In full tragedy, main characters are liberated from dream, a liberation which is at the same time a restriction, because the natural order is present.

Comedy tends to deal with characters in a social group, whereas tragedy is more concentrated on a single individual.

The protagonist of a tragedy is called as a tragic hero. This character is generally from high social and moral standing but not perfect in the Elizabethan tragedies. In this respect, he is a member of upper class and an intellectual type in these tragedies. In contrast, tragic hero is from lower or middle class and an uneducated type in modern tragedies unlike the former ones. Although there is the conception of a tragic hero in ancient and Elizabethan tragedies, it is almost impossible to call tragic protagonists of modern tragedies, who is a common man, as a tragic hero. Therefore, the concept of tragic hero has changed throughout the time as the means of an evolution between the Elizabethan and modern tragedies. In modern tragedies, main tragic characters do not behave heroically unlike tragic heroes of the Elizabethan tragedies. On the other hand, tragic heroes of the Elizabethan tragedies have social purposes and they sacrifice themselves for the sake of their states, while modern tragic characters have individual purposes and they sacrifice themselves for their families and personal reasons.

Moreover, The Elizabethan tragic heroes are in the service of divine powers and gods, while modern heroes are under control of society and social pressure in the materialistic world of twentieth century. Consequently, audience of modern time witnesses tragic hero to have a deep evolution in the sense of his position, purpose and supreme forces, which he obey, in modern tragedy. These changes in main characteristics of tragic hero from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy are also essential changes and evolution of tragedy between two different tragic periods.

Chief aspect that makes the hero tragic is when he has a tragic flaw, weakness, transgression or excess of arrogant ambition that leads to his downfall. Northrop Frye regards typical tragic hero to be somewhere between divine and ordinary human:

The tragic hero is typically on the top of the wheel of fortune, half-way between human society on the ground and the something greater in the sky. Prometheus, Adam, and Christ hang between heaven and earth, between a world of paradisaal

freedom and a world of bondage. Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning: Milton's Samson destroys the Philistine temple with himself, and Hamlet nearly exterminates the Danish court in his own fall (1957, 207)

Tragic hero was mostly used in ancient Greek tragedy as convenient to Aristotle's characteristics of tragic man. These characteristics were treated by ancient Greek tragedians as if they were a common law. Aristotle's seven determinations for tragic hero are listed as:

1. A belief in his own freedom. He makes choices when he faced dilemmas, and he has the faith and courage to accept the outcomes of his choices.

2. A supreme pride. The pride seems a reflection of arrogance and conceit. It seems to demonstrate a superiority to fellow human beings and an equality with gods. But it gives the tragic hero a unique power and dignity.

3. Capacity for suffering. He suffers because he believes in what he is doing and because he feels both guilt, and guiltlessness at the same time. He justifies his actions, yet is not convinced they are just. He has the strength to endure the pains inflicted upon him. He has no fear of death. He questions the forces with and without him that drive him to the actions that destroy him.

4. A sense of commitment. Once the forces of the conflict are set in motion, he is committed. There is an inevitability that moves him to the resolution. He can stop the movement by a change in decision, but his dedication leads him to assert the freedom to let the process follow its chosen direction.

5. Vigorous protest. The tragic hero objects with vehemence, logic, and pain against the situation in which he finds himself. He does not accept his fate meekly. He

cries out against the gods, against his own weakness, against the world, against the forces that placed him in jeopardy.

6. Transfiguration. The suffering of the tragic man refines him. He learns from his agony, and his awareness lies in his deeper understanding of the human condition. He is ennobled and softened by his experiences. He begins to see more clearly in his place in the universe and the greatness that is human potential. He rises from the ash heap a wise and more humane individual, and his death is not an obliteration because he leaves a memory of glory.

7. Impact. Out of the tragedies of life faced heroically and questioningly, out of the desire to know the why of pain and suffering, out of the frequent nobility with which a few heroic beings face the punishments of life comes a deeper understanding of the human condition, not only on the part of the tragic hero but also on the part of the other characters in the play, as well as the audience who participate in his agony.

Aristotle's influence is seen on the Elizabethan tragedians like Shakespeare. The Elizabethan tragic hero has the belief in his freedom and he makes choices when he faces dilemmas even it becomes too late. He also has supreme pride which prepares his destruction like ancient Greek heroes. The excessive pride of tragic hero is called as "hybris" in ancient tragedy. Hybris prevents a hero from facing with himself and leads him to his tragic downfall. The Elizabethan hero suffers and believes in what he does as well. But he is also afraid of death unlike ancient Greek heroes. He is against his fate and situation, too. He also refines after his suffering and learn from it by reaching an awareness like ancient tragic heroes.

Modern tragic hero, who is a low man unlike the noble man of ancient Greek and Elizabethan tragedies, believes in what he does unconsciously without reaching to an awareness and maturity. Modern hero does not have an endurance and capacity to suffer unlike former heroes. He does not have a supreme pride, or hybris, because of his personal inadequacy as a basic characteristic of typical man in a materialistic society of twentieth century unlike former heroes. Finally, he is not in a unique and powerful

position which makes former heroes to be in a dignified position between supreme and humane.

The concept of fate is stronger than gods in ancient Greek tragedy. Hence ancient Greek tragedians believe that gods exist primarily to approve the natural order. The sense of Greek tragedy also implies that if any personality, even a divine one, possesses a genuine power of rejection over law, it is most unlikely that he will want to exercise it. In Christianity, much the same is true of Christ's personality in relation to the inscrutable decrees of the father. In Elizabethan tragedy, there is same concept of fate like in ancient Greek tragedy as its influence. The fate is also called as "moira" in ancient tragedy.

Shakespeare has an innovative characteristic and a contribution to tragedy with his concept of free will among the other Elizabethan tragedians. Typical Shakespearean tragic hero has his free will which provides him to indicate his own fate, or moira, with his mind. On the other hand, the famous English author and critic Northrop Frye maintains traditional view of Shakespeare on the concept of fate as ancient Greek tragedians hold this concept in the same way with him unlike his innovative view on this concept:

Similarly the tragic process in Shakespeare is natural in the sense that it simply happens, whatever its cause, explanation, or relationships. Characters may grope about for conceptions of gods that kill us for their sport, or for a divinity that shapes our ends, but the action of tragedy will not abide our questions, a fact often transferred to the personality of Shakespeare. (1957, 208)

The vision of law operates as revenge in revenge tragedy. The hero provokes enmity or inherits a situation of enmity and return of avenger constitutes the catastrophe. Sudden happening that causes great suffering, destruction and tragic end of the hero is called as "catastrophe" in tragedy. Dilemmas of tragic heroes force them to make choices. Their wrong choices as a result of these dilemmas cause heroes to suffer for a long time in tragedies and this period of suffering directs heroes to a tragic

destruction or catastrophe. Revenge tragedy is a simple tragic structure, and as most simple structures can be a very powerful revenge tragedy, often retains a central theme even in the most complex tragedies. The original act, which is the main crime and cause of a possible revenge in a revenge tragedy, provoking the revenge sets up an antithetical or a counterbalancing movement and the completion of the movement resolves tragedy.

However, the frequency of device of making revenge comes from another world through gods or ghosts, or oracles. This device expands conceptions of both nature and law beyond limits of obvious and actual. Tragic hero disturbs a balance in nature—nature being conceived as an order stretching over two superior forces of the visible—and the invisible—a balance which sooner or later must keep itself. Greeks describe the righting of balance as “nemesis.” Nemesis is a divine punishment for heroes in ancient tragedies. In this respect, the agent or instrument of nemesis may be human vengeance, ghostly vengeance, divine vengeance, divine justice, accident, fate or the logic of events but the essential thing is that nemesis happens and happens impersonally, unaffected, as *Oedipus Tyrannus* is illustrated by the moral quality of human motivation involved.

Revenge tragedies were mostly written and audience enjoyed watching them in the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is a major and may be the greatest kind of a revenge tragedy that has ever written.

There are two general formulas which have often been used to explain tragedy. One of these formulas maintains that the omnipotence of an external fate exhibits all tragedy. The overwhelming majority of tragedies leave people with a sense of the supremacy of impersonal power and of the limitation of human effort. But the fatalistic reduction of tragedy confuses tragic condition with tragic process. The fate is normally external to the hero only after the process has been set in a tragedy. The Greek moira is in its normal, or pre-tragic, form the internal balancing condition of life. It appears as external or antithetical necessity only after it has been violated as a condition of life, just as justice is the internal condition of an honest man, but the external antagonist of the criminal.

On the contrary, the other general formula of tragedy puts forward that the act which sets the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of moral law, whether human or divine, that Aristotle's "hamartia" or "flaw" must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing. Greeks call tragic flaw and weakness of a hero, which constitutes tragic aspect and leads the hero to his tragic destruction, as "hamartia." A large number of tragic heroes possess "hybris" –a proud, passionate, obsessed or soaring mind which brings about a morally understandable downfall. In this sense, hybris is the normal precipitating agent of catastrophe.

Hamartia of tragic hero associates with Aristotle's ethical conception of "proairesis" or free choice of an end and Aristotle thinks of tragedy as morally, almost physically, understandable. However, the conception of catharsis, which is central to Aristotle's view of tragedy, is consistent with moral reductions of it. The purgation and releasing of strong feelings like pity and fear is called as "catharsis" in ancient tragedy. Pity and terror are moral feelings and they are relevant but not attached to tragic situation.

Karl Jaspers, who is an American literary critic on tragedy, determines basic characteristics of tragedy. He points out that breakdown and failure reveal true nature of things. He states that the reality of life is not lost by failure in tragedy, on the contrary, it makes itself wholly and decisively felt. Jasper stresses the important role of transcendence, which refers to supernatural and transitory elements, in tragedy:

There is no tragedy without transcendence. Even defiance unto death in a hopeless battle against gods and fate is an act of transcending: it is a movement towards man's proper essence, which he comes to know as his own in the presence of his doom. (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 43)

In this passage, he focuses on an extraordinary aspect of tragedy in which he connects with a transcendental characteristic. This means that tragic heroes look for superhuman forces and they revolt against supreme forces which are beyond their limitations in tragedy. But this transcendental and heroic characteristic of tragic man,

which Jaspers extends beyond limitations of human mind and bodily power, is not possible to find in modern tragic world unlike former ages because of a clear transition of tragic character from a noble hero to a common man.

He maintains to necessity of tragic consciousness in drama. tragic consciousness gives body to its own thought. He claims in relation to tragic mood that it is only through tragic mood that tension and disaster in events affecting people directly or in the world as a whole. Tragedy shows up in battle, in victory, in defeat and in guilt. For him, it is measure of man's greatness in breakdown and failure. Tragedy reveals itself in man's unconditional will to truth. There, tragedy reveals as the ultimate disharmony of existence. Karl Jaspers also insists on the importance of tragic atmosphere as a basic tragic characteristic:

The tragic atmosphere arises as the strange and sinister fate to which we have been abandoned. There is something alien that threatens us, something we cannot escape, wherever we go, whatever we see, whatever we hear, there is something in the air which will destroy us, no matter what we do or wish. (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 45)

Tragic atmosphere is prepared beforehand with appearance of a guilt like a bloody murder or an immoral behaviour in a tragic play. Thus, after occurrence of such a guilt, which is committed by tragic protagonist, the play has a tragic meaning, atmosphere and tension.

He refers to concepts of the individual and universal that these concepts are naturally in all tragedies. Individual opposes to universal laws, norms and necessities. Untragically, he represents mere willfulness opposing the law; tragically, he represents genuine exception which, though opposing the law, yet has truth on his side. In this context, he stresses on the role of individual and society to arise tragedy:

General principles are concentrated in the forces of society, in social stratification, rules, and offices. Hence society may give rise to tragedy. on the

other hand, General principles may be concentrated in human character as an imperative of eternal laws which run counter to the drives and the personality of the individual. Hence there are also tragedies that arise from character. (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 47)

Jaspers claims the existence of a battle in which man is against the gods and universal powers in tragedy. For him, this battle takes place between the single individual and powers, between man and demons, between man and gods. He gives characteristics of these powers to be incomprehensible: “These powers are elusive. They escape man if he would grasp or just understand them. They are both there and not there. The same god is helpful and vicious” (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 48). Man does not know. Unknowingly and unconsciously he falls prey to the powers that he wanted to escape. Furthermore, he admits strongly the existence of another battle in which gods are against one another. He points out that the battle is a combat of the powers, of the gods themselves. Man is only a pawn in these terrible games, or their scene, or their medium; but man’s greatness consists precisely in his act of becoming such a medium. By this act, he becomes imbued with a soul and identical with the powers.

I observe frankly that the battles of the Elizabethan tragedies were between a hero and a supreme power like god, or divine order, whereas this battle has gained a very different meaning which is namely a battle between an ordinary man and a materialistic society as a new kind of power in modern tragedies. Furthermore, I claim that tragic man cannot fight his battles in a traditional sense because of an existing social pressure in modern tragedies.

The concepts of victory and defeat are exist in all tragedies. Jaspers asks the question who or what conquers in tragedy? He answers to his own question that men and the powers are crashing. The result normally suggests decision in favour of the conqueror and the losers are wrong. But he says this is not true and claims that: “Victory is not his who triumphs but his who fails in defeat. In suffering failure, the loser conquers” (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 49). Jaspers considers that tragedy becomes self-conscious by understanding the fate of its characters as the consequence of guilt and as

the inner working out of guilt itself. He also states the social dimension of the concept of guilt rather than its personal dimension as a basic tragic characteristic: “The question of guilt, however, is not limited to the actions and lives of individual men. Rather, it refers to humanity as a whole, of which every one of us is a part” (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 50). The concept of guilt is generally as a bloody murder which is a functional and concrete act in the Elizabethan tragedies. In contrast, the guilt is generally as a more symbolic and abstract act like a disloyal, immoral or wrong behaviour in modern tragedies.

Tragic knowledge as a tragic characteristic exists at the end of every tragedy as a result of tragic hero’s suffering and failure. Moreover, tragic heroes reach a degree of maturity and knowledge as a result of their sufferings and failures in the Elizabethan tragedies but tragic characters do not reach such a level of recognition in modern tragedies. They are unconscious and another tragic character has tragic knowledge because of his suffering instead of tragic protagonists at the end of modern tragedies.

Jaspers lastly points out that the cause of man’s smallness and undoing is because he is not god. But he can carry his human possibilities to their extreme and can be undone by them with his eyes open that is his greatness. Therefore, what I essentially learn from tragic knowledge is what makes man suffer and what makes him fail, what he takes upon himself in the face of which realities, and in what manner or form he sacrifices his existence. Karl Jaspers concludes his determinations of basic tragic characteristics by showing positive and negative sides of tragic man:

The tragic hero—man heightened and intensified—is man himself in good, and evil, fulfilling himself in goodness and canceling out his own identity in evil. In each case his existence is shipwrecked by the consistency with which he meets some unconditional demand, real or supposed. (Corrigan, ed., 1965: 51)

The tragic hero is driven by his resistance, stubbornness and pride into the “greatness” of evil. His endurance, courage and love raise him up into the good. He always grows in stature through the experience of life at its limits. The playwright sees

in him the bearer of something that reaches beyond individual existence, the bearer of a power, a principle, a character and a demon.

It is proper to the aim of this thesis to state classical, Shakespearean and modern tragic characteristics in a comparative way at the end of this chapter which is about tragedy and tragic characteristics. The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle determined characteristics of classical tragedy. These characteristics were followed by later tragedians like Shakespeare as the main tragic principles and they are briefly listed as:

1. Tragedy is an imitation of a single, unified action that is serious, complete, and probable, and has a certain magnitude.
2. It concerns the fall of a person whose character is good, believable and consistent.
3. The fall is caused in part by some error, or frailty in the protagonist, and not by a vice or depravity.
4. The language is decorated with each kind of artistic ornament.
5. Tragedy is presented in the form of an action, not narrative.
6. It arouses in the audience the emotions of pity and terror resulting in a catharsis of these emotions.

Next, characteristics of a Shakespearean tragedy, which has been followed by many other tragedians in the following periods, are listed briefly as:

1. Although a tragedy may have many characters, it is preeminently the story of one person or at most two.
2. The story leads up to and includes the death of the hero.
3. The story depicts also the troubled part of the hero's life, which precedes and leads up to his death.
4. The hero is a conspicuous person, a person of high degree.
5. The suffering and calamity are exceptional, of a striking kind. They are as a rule unexpected and are a strong contrast to previous happiness or glory.
6. The suffering and calamity extend far beyond the protagonist so as to make the whole scene one of woe.
7. This scene becomes the chief source of the tragic emotions, especially pity.

Finally, modern tragic characteristics are listed briefly as literary terms:

1. Status—it concerns the plight of a character fitting the classical model in temperament save for the fact that the tragic man is not necessarily of high status.
2. Society—it may serve as the oppressor for the modern tragic man. Without the means to fight his battles, protect himself or his family or to seek moral/intellectual guidance, he may have been

poorly served by an uncaring and unkind society. 3. Audience—the audience may feel empathy for the tragic man because his story is believable and common. Unlike classical tragedy, where the tragic hero is collectively and publicly mourned, the modern tragic hero may pass away without recognition and ceremony.

To conclude this chapter, I assert frankly that there are some possible common points among the classical, Elizabethan and modern tragedies. First, the death of tragic man is in a way in most modern and former tragedies. Second, the audience feels the emotions of pity, fear and empathy in these tragedies. Besides these common points, I also maintain some evolutionary characteristics among the others in the classical, Elizabethan and modern tragedies. The tragic man has changed throughout the time from a position of high degree in former tragedies to a position of low degree in modern tragedies. Furthermore, the modern tragic man dies silently and simply without any ceremony unlike the classical and Elizabethan hero for whom a striking ceremony is held. Another important tragic change is in the role of the supreme forces. These forces are divine and religious powers in the classical and Elizabethan tragedies while they became materialistic society and business world—whose pressures and wrong values direct a low man into his own destruction, namely, the death— in modern tragedy.

CHAPTER TWO
TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN *HAMLET*

2.1. William Shakespeare : A Revolutionary Playwright

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in 1564. He was the son of Mr. John Shakespeare and Mrs. Mary Arden. His father was a tradesman and he suffered from financial problems. His mother was a land-owning heiress from her wealthy father. Shakespeare presumably attended Stratford Grammar School, where he acquired a respectable knowledge of Latin, but he did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge for a college education. Later, he married Anne Hathaway at the age of eighteen in 1582. He had a girl whose name was Susanne and then the twins, a boy and a girl whose names are Hamnet and Judith.

Later, he went to London to make a place for himself in the theatrical world of this city. He achieved his ambition to be a well-known playwright since an author of that time Robert Greene refers to him resentfully as: “An upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, who, being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country” (Abrams, ed., 1993: 801).¹ Shakespeare joined in a theatre company, which is The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, by 1594. This theatre company started to use the theatre of The Globe, which is the host of Shakespeare’s greatest works, in 1599. Then they changed their name as King’s Men when James I came to the throne in 1603.

Blackfriars was rented by King’s Men as a new theatre in 1608. This theatre was smaller than the theatre of The Globe. Shakespeare wrote his last plays in this theatre to a middle-class audience. He brought his career to an end because of a dreadful fire in the theatre of The Globe during the performance of his last play *Henry VIII* in 1613. He died in Stratford and in 1616. After his death, Shakespeare left a lasting legacy to the world in the form of thirty-eight plays, one hundred and fifty-four sonnets and two narrative poems.

¹ Johannes Factotum was used to define an idle and a wanderer person who has no business in England of Shakespeare’s time. Greene mocks with Shakespeare by using the names of “Johannes Factotum” and “Shake-scene.”

I will focus on the analysis of tragic characteristics in *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan revenge tragedy in this chapter. It will be divided into two sections. First, Shakespeare's biography will be mentioned briefly in the first section of this chapter. Next, tragic characteristics in *Hamlet* will be comprehensively discussed in the following section.

2.2. *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy

Hamlet is one of the most famous and important tragic plays in English language. It was written by Shakespeare, approximately, in 1601. *Hamlet* is a perfect example of tragic mode. It is a milestone in Shakespeare's dramatic development as a tragedy. The playwright achieves artistic maturity in this work through his brilliant depiction of the hero's struggle with two opposing forces: moral integrity and the need to avenge his father's murder.

Hamlet is a tragic story of a prince whose king and father has been murdered, whose mother has been seduced by the murderer. The murderer is Claudius who is his uncle and the brother of the former king old Hamlet. His mother Gertrude marries Claudius who is the new king any more and she is even induced to participate in the murder. Hamlet's throne has been usurped by the murderer and his father's ghost has returned to demand vengeance. The ghost is prompted to his revenge by heaven and hell. After appearance of his father's ghost to demand vengeance, Hamlet tries to take his father's revenge by killing his uncle and the new king Claudius. But he has a strong and dreadful dilemma which prevents him from acting. Finally, Hamlet kills king Claudius but he is too late because many people around him in the court die including his mother Gertrude, his lover Ophelia, her brother Laertes, her father Polonius and even himself until he takes his revenge and kills Claudius in the tragic end of the play.

Elder Olson, who is a dramatic critic, argues that Hamlet has clear reasons to act for the vengeance of his father's murder nevertheless, he does not act to revenge and that is the dominant theme of the play. Olson tells that: "Indeed, the whole point of the play is that with such extraordinary motivation, Hamlet does not act" (Brockett, ed.,

1972: 50). Hamlet is assigned by his father's ghost to avenge the murder and, apparently, the adultery with ghost's own words:

O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest (Shakespeare, 1951: 1037)

The conflict of Hamlet that he cannot act between seeming and being, pretence and truth may be the centre-line of the play. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pretend to be Hamlet's friends to forward the king's aims; Ophelia pretends to be alone; the players are used as a pretended entertainment for Hamlet, with the real purpose of sounding him; the Queen pretends to be alone in her closet; the voyage to England is a pretended mission; the final duel in the court is a pretence.

Shakespeare influenced from the legendary story of *Amleth*, which belonged to the Danish history in twelfth century, while creating *Hamlet*. It is a play of questions. Unresolved questions are constantly being asked about whether the ghost of old Hamlet is friendly or a demon, or whether Ophelia commits suicide or dies accidentally. The inability to know the truth and to act on it contain in Hamlet itself, who is constantly seeking answers to his questions throughout the play. Hamlet remains tantalisingly difficult to interpret as a character. The famous German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described him as a poet: "a sensitive man who is too weak to deal with the political pressures of Denmark" (Gradesaver, 2004).

Hamlet is a revenge tragedy. An important part of all revenge tragedies is that after tragic hero decides finally for revenge, he delays the actual revenge until the end of the play. Hamlet's delay of killing Claudius takes on three distinct stages. Firstly, he had to prove that the ghost was actually telling the truth and he did this by staging the play which he called as the "mousetrap" at the court. Hamlet's psychological state, actually his inner difficulty in the process of evaluation of ghost's rightness, creates a

dilemma for him to act or not to act. Hamlet's own words reveal his inner thought to prove the ghost's credibility with a play at the court:

I'll have these players play something like the murder
of my father before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick. If 'a do blench,
I know my course (Shakespeare, 1951: 1046)

When Claudius was so furious and terrified, Hamlet knew that he was guilty. The second stage of his delay for killing Claudius was when Hamlet could have killed Claudius while he was confessing his guilt to god. If Hamlet had done it in this stage then Claudius would have gone to the heaven because he confessed his guilt and refined while Hamlet's father was in purgatory because he did not get the opportunity to confess and refine from his guilts. Therefore, Hamlet decided not to murder him at this point of the play. He is in the state of hesitation and in the moment of truth when he sees king Claudius while he is confessing his guilt and asking forgiveness to god. Hamlet reveals his thought and moment of hesitation after he decides not to murder Claudius:

No. Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage;
Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At game, a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't—
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes (Shakespeare, 1951: 1054)

The third delay was that he got side-tracked. He accidentally killed Polonius, who is the consultant of the king, and this murder created a whole new problem with the fact that Laertes, the son of Polonius, now wanted Hamlet dead. After Hamlet committed this murder, he was also sent off and unable to see the king for another few

weeks until he could finally kill him. A different comment is briefly stated about *Hamlet* and its innovative aspect as different from other conventional revenge tragedies of that age: “What makes *Hamlet* stand out from many other revenge plays of the period is not that it rejects the conventions of its genre but that it both enacts and analyses them” (Courseworkbank, 2004). I believe that *Hamlet* has all characteristics of a typical revenge tragedy of the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare used typical characteristics of revenge tragedies innovatively. Hence this play is remarkable among other examples of this tragic type.

The play also consists of a mad scene where Ophelia has gone mad because her father Polonius had been killed and because Hamlet was sent off to England. The sexual aspect of the play was brought in when Claudius married Gertrude after he had dreadfully killed old Hamlet and taken his throne. *Hamlet* also follows almost every aspect of Thomas Kyd’s formula for a revenge tragedy. The only point is that the accomplices on both sides were not killed in *Hamlet* because Horatio, the loyal and trustworthy friend of Hamlet, was the only one to survive at the end of the play although if it was not Hamlet, Horatio would have committed suicide when he said: “I am more an antique Roman than a Dane. Here’s yet some liquor left” (Shakespeare, 1951: 1071). If Horatio had killed himself, then *Hamlet* would have totally followed the Kydian formula as well as the regular conventions for an Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

The study of Hamlet’s character is all-important in the study of the play. Such a comprehensive study on Hamlet’s character was possible in later ages after Shakespeare’s own time to complicate the problem of the play by considering Hamlet’s temperament as an essential and a decisive factor in dramatic conflict upon which the play rests even to make this factor usurp upon the apparent problem and transcend it. In a sense, the whole theme and discussion of the play is the tragedy of a man who cannot make up his mind, not for want of evidence, but because of a constitutional defect of the character. Hamlet’s feigned madness, setting him apart from all men, is the reflection of his ultimate, desperate solitariness in his grievous fate a shelter as also a device. What Hamlet has to decide about is murder and murder of a king at that his own uncle and

husband of his own mother. For this reason, Hamlet is in the position of a judge in a trial of Claudius. In fact, there is no other alternative to murder for Hamlet.

He was called upon to set right something bad in the state of Denmark. He could neither shirk nor delegate his task but must execute himself. The core of the corruption was his uncle Claudius, the king of Denmark, linked with his mother Gertrude in an unholy marriage. At the same time, she was the Queen. Claudius was legally not a usurper but the king by election after the Danish fashion and a king of power, and quality, worthy of his throne. There is awareness of this dilemma even in Claudius' mind as it appears in the prayer scene in that moment of self-revelation. He possesses of the effects for which he murdered his brother and one of these effects is freedom from the justice as it is understood implicitly in his words:

In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law (Shakespeare, 1951: 1053)

When the king Claudius is in sanctuary, the theme of complete vengeance is emphasised by Hamlet's words in the prayer scene. There, Claudius is truly protected from the death by divinity. Because Hamlet is in a dilemma or moral conflict when he recognises Claudius' confession about the murder of his brother old Hamlet. Firstly, Hamlet wants to take the revenge of his father to restore the divine order in Denmark. But he is not sure that whether to kill a person, even he is a murderer, is a sin or not and whether it is against moral principles or not in a religious aspect.

Conscience, indeed, makes Hamlet a coward, as he states in the play, if cowardice is defined to seek not only certainty of the knowledge but also certainty of his right and duty to execute justice. The gradual arrival of him is at the solution of his dilemma in the execution of the justice. He does not, at first, question the status of Claudius as the king. Hamlet would not dream of moving to demand his own claims and ambitions. He can only be moved by the divine justice as an instrument. Conviction of

his duty grows along with the conviction that Claudius is not the true king in the eyes of heaven that a higher sanction invalidates his election.

After the play scene which reveals the guiltiness of the king Claudius for Hamlet, he is ready to understand rightness of the ghost's words about Claudius' murder and his permission from divine powers. Hamlet is also willing to carry out his mission to command himself to purge Denmark and to avenge the shedding of royal blood. After this moment, Hamlet refers to Claudius as a murderer and villain in Queen Gertrude's chamber: "a vice of kings; a cutpurse of the empire and the rule," [...] "A king of shreds and patches—" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1055). I infer from Hamlet's words that he does not see him as a true and complete king.

Then he fully asserts the dread task as heaven's justiciar that is laid upon him: "Heaven hat pleas'd it so, To punish me with this, and this with me, That I must be their scourge and minister" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1056). Next, Hamlet is more plainly still that he has dismissed Claudius in his mind and indeed has assumed kingship himself. This is the meaning of his startling words when he jumps into Ophelia's grave in the graveyard scene. He cries out in her grave: "This is I, Hamlet the Dane" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1067). I think that his dilemma vanishes with these words.

Horatio is clearly the most trustworthy, sincere and best friend of Hamlet in the play. Horatio is also his equal as one gentleman with another, fellow students, and comrades. But Horatio's own view of his companionship with Hamlet is inferred by his words in their first meeting of the play: "your poor servant ever" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1032). A higher loyalty must be invoked to overcome the impulse of the personal honour of warrior-companion. Therefore, Horatio has to continue to serve his lord by living on. For Hamlet as for Horatio, the happiness of an honourable suicide was forbidden by the call of duty. Important issues are safety, honour and welfare of Denmark, and the success or failure of Hamlet's sacrifice of himself to the cause laid upon him in the play. These issues are more important and powerful than Hamlet's personal reputation. C. J. Sisson, who is the English theatrical critic, refers to the idea

that justice was wrought by Hamlet and he dwells on Horatio's importance as the absolute reporter of Hamlet's deeds for justice in the world.

Justice must not only to be done, but must be seen to be done. Only Horatio can ensure this in his report of the whole action 'to the yet unknowing world,' the more urgently 'even while men's mind are evil.' Hamlet's concern for justice dominates the play throughout. The issues are far greater than those of mere life, and death, which loom so large in materialistic thought. The tragedies that set forth for us the nobler manifestations of the human spirit have for theme not the triumph of death but the conquest of death reduced to a negligible irrelevance where men rise to their full stature. (1963, 72–73)

Hamlet was not just an avenger of a personal wrong and as the servant of that providence in which he shows his full trust throughout. On the contrary, he was god's justiciar in Denmark as a rightful successor in the eyes of heaven to his murdered father and he is guided by heavenly intervention. Therefore, he could, as the true king, perform the will of heaven against a false king. Hamlet died in his sacred office and duty. He sacrificed himself for god's justice in Denmark. After his death, his loyal friend Horatio wished him a safe journey from the earth with his last words: "Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince, And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1072). The centre-line of the play is summarised with a few words that Hamlet's delays for not to act as he was charged with the duty of killing Claudius and taking his revenge to protect divine order and to change the corrupted regime of the state.

Hamlet is in a dilemma between to act or not to act. He is so furious about what his father's ghost has told him. On the other hand, he has a distrust towards the ghost and his distrust of the ghost becomes a reason for his initial delay, and for his decision to use the play called as *The Murder of Gonzago*, which has a similar theme to Claudius' villainous murder to purge his guilty feelings with a murder scene, as a test. While the play is certainly planned as a test for Claudius' guilt, it is primarily a test for the ghost's sincerity and rightness. Claudius' harsh reaction towards the play simply

confirms the validity of the ghost's words. Hamlet obviously expresses his doubt about the ghost's sincerity, honesty and goodness before its rightness has not been clarified thanks to the play, yet:

The spirit that I have seen may be a devil;
 and the devil hath power t' assume a pleasing shape;
 yea, and perhaps out of my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 More relative than this. The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (Shakespeare, 1951: 1046)

After the play, which means a test for the ghost's reliability and Claudius' guiltiness, Hamlet understands rightness of the ghost. Thus, the question about the ghost in his mind is resolved. Hamlet has a dilemma throughout the play and this dilemma is the major figure of the play. Hamlet cannot be sure about Claudius' murder until the play but after the play the ghost's honesty and Claudius' guilt are proved. Guilt is a tragic characteristic and it is found in tragic plays. A man cannot escape from his guilt in tragedies. Hamlet kills Claudius at the end of the play.

It is a delayed murder which is also Hamlet's tragic flaw or weakness. If he had killed Claudius while he was praying and confessing his guilt to god, Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, Queen Gertrude and even Hamlet himself would not have died. Hamlet is an intellectual hero who studied in the university of Wittenberg before he comes to Denmark for the death, indeed murder, of his father. Even though his father's ghost informs him that he was killed by his brother Claudius and his revenge should be taken by Hamlet as he is charged with this duty by divine and high power of the earth.

Hamlet cannot act to kill his uncle Claudius before he is sure about his uncle's guilt and he inquires about Claudius' brutal crime. Hamlet has a strong moral dilemma and inner conflict during the process of inquiry until the play proves the truth of ghost's words about Claudius' murder. Hamlet even thinks of death but he cannot commit

suicide because he has virtue and piety to a some degree. He believes to be a sin to commit suicide as well as to kill someone else. Furthermore, he is afraid of the life after death and nightmares. So he cannot dare to commit suicide. Hamlet expresses his moral dilemma and wish for death, and also his fear of indefiniteness about events of after death in his most famous soliloquy:

To be, or not to be—that is the question;
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? To die to sleep—
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
 To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub.;;
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil;
 Must give us pause (Shakespeare, 1951: 1047)

An English literary critic G. Wilson Knight portrayed the Denmark of Claudius and Gertrude as a healthy and smoothly-running community. Knight described Claudius as an efficient administrator and asserted that Claudius had sensible ideas since he did not let memories of past block the promise of future. In contrast, he described Hamlet as a figure of nihilism and death. According to Knight, Hamlet has communed with the dead and been instructed never to let past be forgotten. He mentioned about Hamlet with his negative personal aspects. He claimed for Hamlet: “‘Hamlet is an element of evil in the state of Denmark,’ ‘a living death in the midst of life.’ He is an alien at the court, ‘inhuman—or superhuman... a creature of another world’” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 20).

On the contrary, Knight admitted that Hamlet was in the right and if he had able to act quickly, and cleanly, all might have been well. He refers to central problem of the play: “The question of the relative morality of Hamlet and Claudius reflects the ultimate problem of this play” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 20). Knight also thinks about that the ghost may or may not have been a “goblin damned”; it certainly was not a “spirit of health.” I believe that he may be right in his claims apart from Hamlet. In a way, he is too harsh and merciless in his criticism on Hamlet.

Knight thinks that Hamlet is an evil character but he ignores Hamlet’s troubles which are sources of his personal tragedy. In my opinion, it is unfair for anybody to claim that Hamlet is an evil character without taking into consideration his negative mental and spiritual position. Prince Hamlet loses his dear father and he witnesses his mother’s marriage to his uncle a very short time after his father’s funeral. Moreover, he sees his father’s ghost and recognises that the murderer is his beloved uncle. So all these things should be taken into consideration before blaming Hamlet as the source of badness in Denmark.

Harold Goddard points out as a literary critic that the ghost is the spirit of war and a symbol of the devil, corrupting Hamlet with his “thirst for vengeance” and his instruction to kill. He argues that the king is not villain. Audiences were tempted by Shakespeare to want Claudius’ death in order that they should become ashamed of themselves and realise that killing was evil. He maintains that: “Hamlet loses in the end because he gives in to the ghost and descends to the level of Laertes” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 20). Another literary critic L. C. Knight’s approach to Hamlet is uncompromising in its hostility to the prince and his mission. He refers to Hamlet as: “Hamlet is an immature person lacking ‘a ready responsiveness to life’ who is pushed by the ghost to concentrate on death, and evil” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 20–21). Some critics also argue that Shakespeare himself disapproved of revenge.

Maynor Mack, as a contemporary critic, maintains about Hamlet that: “The act required of him, though retributive justice, is one that necessarily involves the doer in the general guilt” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 21). A different view on Hamlet is maintained by a

contemporary critic Nigel Alexander that: “The proof of the king’s guilt does not solve Hamlet’s problem. ‘The question remains, how does one deal with such a man without becoming like him?’” (Coyle, ed., 1992: 21).

The four closely-related areas, in which the mid twentieth century most strongly separated from earlier criticism on Hamlet, are summarised in this way:

The first area is the authority of the ghost; whether he is an authorised ambassador of heaven or just the spirit of a hurt king, or at the extreme, a false spirit from hell. The second area is the morality of his direction, namely, to exact vengeance for murder; the morality, therefore, of Hamlet’s quest to kill Claudius. The third area is the moral and indeed material condition of Denmark, and its court under Claudius. The fourth one concerns Hamlet himself, how his actions and behaviours generally are judged; what it is thought for him as a man by the audience.

The French marxist critic Lucien Goldman scarcely mentioned Shakespeare. His mention of Shakespeare was dominantly based on Hamlet. According to Goldman, man has to wager that god exists for he is a hidden god whose presence is not absolutely known and whose voice is not definitely heard. He argues tragic hero to long for clear directives to govern his action; he longs for absolutes for an existence which he can value as authentic and uncompromising. But god to whom he looks, in whose existence he dares to believe, whom he longs to obey, is shrouded and hidden; his voice is distorted and scarcely heard, his guidance and his requirements are never clearly noticeable. Goldman refers to the world of tragic hero, the understanding of his deeds from a worldly vision and formation of tragedy because of this relation between a man and the world with his own comment:

The world in which the hero lives, which he would contract out of if he could, is our own accustomed world with our ordinary values. Conspicuously, it is a world never ruled by absolutes, but by perpetual compromise, adjustment and expediency. In this world the hero demands justice, honesty, and truth. In his vain efforts to live what he perceives as the ideals of a higher order in a world

which finds his conduct scandalous, offensive, and insane, lies tragedy. (Coyle, ed., 1992: 24)

Hamlet is in the position which Goldman supposes for tragic hero. From the very first moment, Hamlet insists on absolute facts. He is charged with the mission, which he rapidly expands into a cleansing of the world, a setting right of disjointed time by his father's ghost. He is a minister of heaven to seek his own salvation with others' moral inadequacies and to redirect their lives as he moves forward to a murder which will purify the state of Denmark. The extent of Hamlet's failure cannot be questioned in Philip Edwards' view as a critic. He points out that quite apart from his responsibility for the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia and his school fellows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, there is the simple and inescapable fact that the attempt to rid Denmark of its villain-king has left the country in a worse state than it was at the beginning. Edwards concludes his thoughts by referring to Hamlet's failure and success:

There can be no question about the extent of Hamlet's failure. But tragedy must surely ask about the extent of his success. I have been looking at Hamlet as a somewhat fitfully inspired missionary. It is time to turn to the problem which has so engaged the criticism of the twentieth century, the quality of the mission itself. What do we say about the moral standing of the 'court party?' about the values which Hamlet seeks to reimpose on Denmark? And above all about the ethics of wishing to kill Claudius? (Coyle, ed., 1992: 27)

Nigel Alexander maintains that *Hamlet* is a play of ideas. He asserts that: "The problems of Hamlet exist for an audience as the result of dramatic presentation of a number of complex intellectual and emotional questions" (Coyle, ed., 1992: 47). He states that these moral and political problems are realised within the context of a murder story which involves three families and an entire state in a deeply disturbing conflict of love and hate. The spectator's attention is particularly focused on these problems through the character of Hamlet. In a remarkable series of speeches and soliloquies Hamlet, who is torn by conflicting emotions and divided against himself, asks the tormented questions which create the special quality of the play.

According to Alexander, it is necessary for the critic and director to observe that the difficulties and doubts of the protagonist are only some of the dramatic methods which are used by Shakespeare to draw necessary questions of the play to audience's attention. He refers to the notion that: "There is a distinction between Hamlet's problems and the problem of Hamlet" (Coyle, ed., 1992: 47). Hamlet's problems, which indeed constitute the essence of tragedy in the play, and the problem of him, which is also another root of tragic essence in the play, are very interesting and important aspects of the play as they are recognised by Alexander.

Fortinbras, who is the prince of Norway in the play, Hamlet and Laertes know that their fathers have been killed. All of them take their revenges in their own styles. The desire for vengeance is a part of lasting pattern of human conduct. The way in which that desire is fulfilled or frustrated in the play forces the audience to examine this kind of human behaviour and the effect that it has upon the lives and fortunes of all of the characters. Alexander believes that "*Hamlet* is a masterpiece because it is designed to provide intense and unusual possibilities of self-recognition" (Coyle, ed., 1992: 49). Revenge, madness and possible self-destruction are all debated passionately in Hamlet's soliloquies. The court of Denmark is bound together by the usual ties of kinship and hierarchic social order which can be traced in human society from the 'primitive' tribe to the 'advanced' industrial corporation.

The structure of this particular society influences from the fact that its present king obtained the crown by murdering his brother. The play dramatises the way in which Claudius attempts to conceal this fact. Although he is legally and socially accepted as king of Denmark, he could hardly count upon the support of his society if the true facts were known. In the course of the play the 'natural' bonds of the society of Denmark are broken in almost every imaginable manner. As the characters, both men and women, respond to intolerable pressures which are created by violence and treachery, they become themselves violent and treacherous.

Hamlet's soliloquies are devices which are used by Shakespeare to reflect his inner conflicts, thoughts and emotions to audience. His soliloquies are analysed and separated into some divisions. First, his soliloquies have been filled with his memory of his father and with his attempt to understand the nature of his own position and role of avenger. He has questioned his own apparent inability to act until he talks to his mother in her chamber and sees Claudius while he is praying. In a sense, Hamlet's soliloquies, which are up to his fifth and sixth ones at the end of third act, contain his self-criticism. After this point, Hamlet presents a negative image. He does not mention conscience any more. His words provide a complete vocabulary and grammar of intent for an avenger of blood. Then his seventh soliloquy, in the fourth act, returns to a consideration of the earlier problems of conscience and consciousness. He debates again the questions of honour and action.

A. D. Cousins, who is an academician from Macquarie University, claims that Hamlet reveals himself as a displaced person in his first soliloquy. For Cousins, he has gone from his father's court to university in another country. He returns home to find that, except in a geographical sense, it is home no longer. His father's absence and his uncle's excellence have radically changed the pattern of relationships that identified and nurtured him from birth. Therefore, Hamlet grieves for himself as well as for his father in his first soliloquy. Hamlet begins by comparing his father to 'Hyperion' and his uncle to a 'Satyr': "So excellent a king that was to this Hyperion to a Satyr" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1032). According to Cousins, Hamlet reveals his love and preference of his father as more humane on his comparison of old Hamlet as the former king and Claudius as the present king:

His idealizing the former conveys his sense of his father as having been a more than human figure; specifically, the comparison to Hyperion suggests that King Hamlet was the center of his son's world and was perceived by him as its source of light and life, a benevolent sun king ordering what has become, in his absence, an "unweeded garden." (2003, 1)

Cousins argues that when Hamlet says that Claudius is no more “no more like my father, Than I to hercules” (Shakespeare, 1951: 1032), he indicates his lack of heroic stature, and thus unwittingly, his unsuitability for the role of avenger which is a role soon will be forced upon him by his father’s ghost. Besides this, Robert F. Fleissner, who is an academician from Central State University–Ohio, analyses *Hamlet* from different perspectives in his article “Celebrating a milestone: *Hamlet* Studies.” He asks the question of whether the ghost is at all wicked or not. Then he responds his own question by saying that: “it is not so much evil as it is the informant about evil” (2003, 5).

Fleissner also states that Hamlet lives in the confusion of values and he asserts the most interesting point in the play: “the chief villain at the end becomes converted to a virtuous view, exchanges forgiveness and repents (compare ‘the exchange of forgiveness between Hamlet and Laertes after the duel’)” (2003, 5). In addition to Fleissner’s regards, he also acknowledges that though the prince sees ghost as an honest creature, still he persists to doubt. A pagan spirit is appeared by the ghost using Christian or purgatorial values without confusing these values. For Fleissner, Christian influence is revealed by this pagan ghost.

The famous German poet and literary authority Goethe maintains about Hamlet as a young hero who desires for vengeance after he has seen his father’s ghost. Hamlet, a born prince, feels himself favoured in to be called to punish the usurper of his crown. Amazement and sorrow overwhelm the solitary young man; he becomes bitter against smiling villains, swears never to forget the departed and concludes with the significant scream: “The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!” (Shakespeare, 1951: 1038). In this view, Goethe considers that the act of revenge for Hamlet is against his nature and personal potential. In the same way, he declares his view on Hamlet’s personal characteristic:

The impossible is required of him, —not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding itself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his

thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind (Rolfe, ed., 1889: 15)

The fate draws the plan of Hamlet, as a piece proceeds from a deed of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the play is tragic in its highest sense and deserves a tragic end but nothing else. A German author and critic Schlegel focuses on human destiny and pessimistic side of worldly events in his definition of *Hamlet* as a play:

Hamlet is a singular in its kind : a tragedy of thought inspired by continual and never-satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, and calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators (Rolfe, ed., 1889: 16)

In this passage, Schlegel sees *Hamlet* as a play which reaches one of the deepest points to be a tragic work. Dark and bad sides of tragedy both in the world and human thought in relation to destiny were used skillfully by Shakespeare as some main themes of tragedy in *Hamlet*. He also argues that Hamlet is too much overwhelmed with his own sorrow to have any compassion to spare for others. In this respect, Hamlet may have no firm belief either in himself or in anything else. He also passes over from expressions of religious confidence to sceptical doubts. Schlegel concludes his opinions on Hamlet by claiming that: “He believes in the ghost of his father, as long as he sees it, but as soon as it has disappeared, it appears to him almost in the light of a deception” (Rolfe, ed., 1889: 18). Schlegel’s claim for Hamlet to be under the influence of his melancholy can be proved by Hamlet’s own words in the play: “there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” (Shakespeare, 1951: 1042). Shakespeare is too much involved in the depths of the thought in which neither end nor beginning is discoverable.

Another important critic who comments on Hamlet is the famous English author and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He believes that the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakespeare’s deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Coleridge

refers to a balance that he imagines its existence between mind and sense of a personality. He separates human beings from animals in the concept of mind and he attaches importance to have a balance in human brain. According to him, man is distinguished from the mindless animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense; but in the healthy process of the mind, a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect for if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man thereby becomes the creature of mere meditation and loses his natural power of action. Coleridge concludes his thoughts by referring to Hamlet in relation to the lackness of this balance or equilibrium on him. He thinks that this balance between the mind and sense does not work well in Hamlet:

In Hamlet he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our mind, —an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed: his thoughts, and the images of his fancy, are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his contemplations, acquire, as they pass, a form and a color not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment:—Hamlet is a brave and careless of death: but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastines from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve (Rolfe, ed., 1889: 19–20)

At this point, I consider that Coleridge's assertions about Hamlet should be taken into consideration in order to contemplate Hamlet's difficulties which force him for his tragic end. For this reason, a man like him cannot have a well-balanced organism. He is in a dilemma to act, to take his father's revenge by killing his uncle Claudius, or not to act for various reasons chiefly, he is an intellectual who studied in the university of Wittenberg and cannot kill someone at least without proof of his guilt and he has moral restrictions, obligations not to kill someone since it is a sinful deed.

Thus a man in the position of Hamlet cannot make a reliable and well-balanced decision. Furthermore, it would be unfair to criticise him heavily since he has a mental instability.

In order to summarise and conclude this section of second chapter which is devoted for deep tragic discussion of *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan tragedy, I need to summarise briefly its tragic characteristics. To begin with, in most of tragedies the hero suffers and usually dies at the end. Hamlet as a tragic hero dies by getting cut with a poison-tipped sword. But that is not all to consider a play as a tragedy and sometimes a hero does not even need to die. Every play in which a hero dies is not a tragedy. There are more characteristics which are needed to consider a play as a tragedy. Probably, one of the most important characteristics is an amount of free will.

Tragic characters are required to display some amount of free will in almost every tragedy. If every action is controlled by a hero's destiny, then the hero's death cannot be avoided and in a tragedy the sad part is that it could. Hamlet's death could have been avoided many times. Hamlet had many opportunities to kill Claudius but he did not take advantage of them. A tragic hero does not have to die. While in all Shakespearean tragedies the hero dies, in others he may live but suffer "moral destruction" like Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Every tragic play has to have a tragic hero. The tragic hero must possess many good traits, as well as one flaw, which eventually leads to his downfall.

A tragic hero must be brave and noble in the Elizabethan tragedies like *Hamlet*. He has to be a member of upper class, aristocracy and also to be a well-educated, intellectual gentleman like the character of Hamlet, who is the intellectual prince of Denmark, in the Elizabethan tragedies. The Elizabethan tragic hero should have a social purpose which means his sacrifice of himself for the sake of his state. Hamlet is an Elizabethan tragic hero in this sense because he tries to survive the corrupted state of Denmark. Another characteristic of the Elizabethan tragic hero is the hero's belief in religious powers and his obedience to them. Hamlet is directed by his father's ghost

who claims to be a messenger of divine powers to assign Hamlet to be heaven's justiciar in Denmark. He obeys to divine powers and tries to struggle for the sake of gods.

Moreover, an Elizabethan tragic hero must not back down from his position and he has to have free will in order to stand up for what he believes in. Hamlet is in the position that even he lives a strong moral dilemma, he follows his rightful and moral struggle until the end of the play. He deeply thinks, inquires the guilt of his uncle and determines different strategies against his uncle Claudius to take his revenge in the right time and the place because of his strong free will and intellectuality. Finally, the audience attracts much attention to Hamlet as an Elizabethan hero.

Hamlet has all the good traits for an Elizabethan tragic hero. He is brave, noble and daring. He is also loyal. His loyalty to his father may be a reason for him to be so angry with his uncle Claudius and his mother Gertrude. His another trait is that he was intelligent. He was able to think up the idea of faking insanity in order to get more information about Claudius. But Hamlet had a flaw like other tragic heroes. He could not get around to doing anything because he could not move on. It took him a long time to stop grieving about his father because he did not want to move past that part of his life. After he finally did, Hamlet could not get around to killing Claudius. He kept pretending he was insane even after he was sure that Claudius killed his father. The final example of his inability may be get around to do anything was that he was dating Ophelia for a long time but never got around to marrying her. These characteristics of Hamlet make him as a perfect example of the Elizabethan tragic hero.

The play begins when the crime, which is a villainous murder, has already been committed. This crime is a tragic characteristic under the category of guilt. Tragic atmosphere is created by the playwright in the play with this murder as a tragic characteristic. Disloyalty of Queen Gertrude to his former husband by marrying Claudius and other bloody murders are also in the borders of guilt and tragic atmosphere in the play as characteristics of the Elizabethan tragedies. Hamlet is opposite to divine powers in his battle with them to restore divine order in Denmark by killing Claudius. This battle and situation, in which an individual opposes to divine

powers, are other tragic characteristics. Hamlet is defeated by divinity with his death at the end of his battle. In fact, he is victorious while he was defeated by divine powers. Because he purifies his state from corruption as its noble prince.

The concepts of victory and defeat at the end of tragedies are also tragic characteristics which are found in *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan revenge tragedy. Finally, Hamlet reaches a maturity and tragic knowledge after his sufferings, which are sadness for his father's death and his strong moral dilemma after this death, at the end of the play as another Elizabethan tragic characteristic. All things considered, *Hamlet* is a typical Elizabethan tragedy with its tragic characteristics.

CHAPTER THREE
TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

3.1. Arthur Miller : A Social Dramatist

Arthur Miller was born in New York City, in 1915. he was the son of Isadore and Augusta Miller. His father ran a small coat–manufacturing business; during the depression period of America it failed. After graduating from high school, Miller went to Brooklyn to work in automobile parts warehouse in 1932. He was accepted to the University of Michigan where he studied journalism in 1934. Before graduating in 1938, he won two Avery Hopwood awards in Drama for playwriting. He married Mary Grace Slattery. Then they had two children from this marriage, a girl and a boy whose names were Jane and Robert.

He wrote his first play *All My Sons* and started to a theatrical career in 1947. Then his most important and famous play *Death of a Salesman* was published. This play was translated into at least seventeen languages and brought him an international fame. He received Pulitzer prize for the success of this play. His another successful play *The Crucible* was published in 1953. He divorced his first wife and Marilyn Monroe, who was a famous actress of Hollywood, in 1956. The theme of his play *The Crucible*, which criticised the approach of American government against communists, was the same as that one of the witch–hunt as it happened against the people who were supposed to be wicked and dangerous for Christianity in Europe of the medieval age. He was accused of being a communist and convicted of contempt of congress by the House Un–American Activities Committee for refusing to name the names of his friends. The conviction was overturned the next year. He divorced Marilyn Monroe in 1961. He married Ingeborg Morath the next year and they had a daughter, whose name was Rebecca, in 1963.

Miller died because of a heart failure in Connecticut, 2005.¹ He is one of the major dramatists of the twentieth century American theatre. Critics respect for his blending of vernacular language, social and psychological realism, moral insight. As the commentator June Schlueter has said: “When the twentieth century is history and

¹ Arthur Miller, who was declared as the “legendary American playwright” of the twentieth century after his death by American newspapers, unfortunately, died during the writing phase of this thesis. For this reason, I see it as a necessity to wish him to rest in peace. His death is certainly a huge loss that cannot be carried out by someone else not only in American literature, but also in general literary world.

American drama viewed in perspective, the plays of Arthur Miller will undoubtedly be preserved in the annals of dramatic literature” (Bookrags, 2004).

This last chapter of the thesis mainly focuses on Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* as a typical model of modern tragedy. After tragedy has been discussed detailly with its characteristics in the first chapter and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as a typical model of the Elizabethan tragedy has been analysed comprehensively in the second chapter, the third chapter will study extensively this modern American tragedy. The first section of this last chapter will dwell on Arthur Miller’s biography. The second section will deal with Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy. The third and last section will focus on the comparison of tragic characteristics in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* in order to indicate clear changes between the Elizabethan and modern tragedies. The main discussion, aim and defence of the present thesis will be largely presented in relation to both plays in the last section of this chapter.

3.2. *Death of a Salesman* as a Modern Domestic Tragedy

Two perfect examples of the Elizabethan and modern tragedies, which are *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan tragedy and *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy, will be discussed in a detailed way in the third and last part of this chapter in order to show the evolution of tragic characteristics in these tragic periods as convenient to the aim of this thesis.

Death of a Salesman is Miller’s most widely–admired work. It was written by Miller in 1949. *Death of a Salesman* tells the story of a man who confronts failure in the success–driven society of America and it shows the tragic trajectory which eventually leads to his suicide. Willy Loman as a sixty–year–old salesman returns home being tired and confused from a business trip. His older son Biff returns from the west to visit his family although he does not know how long he is going to stay. His wife Linda tells him that he needs to rest his mind and he should work in New York. His younger son Happy has an idea of starting a line of sporting goods. Thus Biff decides to go to his former

boss Bill Oliver to ask to borrow money. Willy decides to go to his boss Howard Wagner the next day to ask if he can work in New York so that he would not have to drive seven-hundred miles to work.

The next day Willy goes to Howard and Biff goes to see Bill. They decide to celebrate their success by going out for dinner that night. Willy is fired from his job by his boss Howard and after Biff goes to talk to Bill, he does not remember Biff and he does not lend him money. When Biff and Happy, the sons of Willy, meet with Willy at the restaurant at night, Happy lies to Willy that Biff was warmly welcomed by Bill. Willy tells them that he was fired. Happy does not want to put up with his father. He leaves the restaurant with Biff and the two girls whom they have met earlier at the restaurant. Then Willy talks to Biff and after this conversation he realises that Biff loves him. Willy tries to kill himself by crashing his car which would give his family twenty-thousand dollars in life insurance. Tragically, no one but his family and his friend Charley comes to his funeral.

Willy Loman is a symbolic icon of the failing America; he represents those that have striven for success but, in struggling to do so, have instead achieved failure in its most bitter form. Arthur Miller's tragic drama is a probing portrait of the typical American psyche that portrays an extreme craving for success and superior status in a world otherwise fruitless. To a some extent, *Death of a Salesman* concerns with the 'jagged edges of a shattered dream' but on another more tragic and bitter level, it also evokes the decline of a man into insanity and the subsequent effect this has on those around him particularly his family.

Miller changes the archetypal tragic hero with the ordinary American citizen as a characteristic of tragic evolution in modern time. The result is the anti-hero Willy Loman. He is a simple salesman who constantly wishes to become 'great.' Nevertheless, Willy has a waning career as a salesman and he is an aging man who considers himself to be a failure but he is incapable of consciously admitting it. As a result, drama of the play lies not so much in its events but in Willy's deluded perception and recollection of them as the audience witnesses tragic downfall of a helpless man.

In creating Willy Loman, Miller presents the audience with a tragic figure of human proportions. Miller characterises the ordinary man and ennobles his achievements. The name of Loman is created from the name of 'low-man' by the playwright. Biff imagines his father Willy as a 'prince' that evokes a possible comparison with Shakespeare's character of Hamlet. Thus the play is appealed greatly to the audience because an ordinary American is elevated to heroic status. The play conforms to the tragic tradition that there is an anti-hero whose state of hamartia causes him to suffer. The audience is compelled to genuinely sympathise with Willy's downfall because he is an ordinary man who is subject to same temptations as the rest of human beings.

Willy's dead brother Ben is the only member of Loman family who has ever achieved something 'great' when he proclaims: "William, when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen. When I walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich!" (Miller, 2002: 161). Willy respects success. He wants to be successful, to be great but his dream is never fulfilled. Indeed, he feels the only way he can actually fulfill his dream is to commit suicide so that his family may subsequently live off his life insurance. Willy considers Ben as a great and successful person. Therefore, Willy idealises Ben since he fulfilled the genuine American dream which can be briefly to start out with nothing and eventually become rich through effort and hard work. Ironically, this wealth is achieved outside America suggesting that there is little left available for the ordinary individual within the country's own boundaries.

The play is ambigious in its attitude towards the business-success dream but certainly does not rebuke it openly. Nevertheless, when Willy's only close friend Charley declares at Willy's funeral at the end of the play: "Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. [...] A salesman is got to dream, boy" (Miller, 2002: 235), Miller hints at the responsibility of the state influenced 'everyone should have a dream' campaign behind Willy's death, suggesting that the salesman was driven too far, preassuring himself into suicide. Miller judges America in hinting that there is far

greater success to find outside its land. Indeed, there is a lot of room for failure and ruin as well as 'greatness' in America. Hence Willy is a foolish and an ineffectual man for whom the audience feels pity.

Willy detaches himself from reality, living in a life of idealism and dreams that never materialise. He is never fully content with what he possesses at present. Instead he lives in a deluded world where imagination and past experiences crash and frequently appear as far more desirable eras. As a result, Willy continually finds aspects of his life 'remarkable' but never actually realises that he is a failure as a salesman and a father. The lack of understanding eventually leads him to his tragic death; a death he could not escape for he brought it on himself. In killing himself, Willy finally becomes a man of purpose and reason. *Death of a Salesman* is also an allegorical representation of America. Willy's garden is a microcosm of American society as tower blocks continue to raise around him. For the 'ordinary' person, the literally 'Lo(w)-man' in comparison to skyscrapers, life has become overshadowed at the cost of capitalism. The audience is left with the image of garden that will never grow; the ordinary person has been left behind and even rejected by wealthy capitalists of the modern city.

Miller also suggests in the play that there is far more success outside America with everyone succeeding except Willy. Indeed, there are nothing but fruitless hopes and 'shattered dreams' to find within the nation. In one last and vain effort, Willy attempts to 'grow' something for his family in his buying of seeds to plant in the garden. Nevertheless, even Willy has come to realise that his life is a failure when he declares: "Oh, I'd better hurry. I've got to get some seeds. I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground" (Miller, 2002: 220–221). Miller's intention is to express his own vision of American society and the nature of individuality.

Miller bases on Willy's character on his own uncle Manny Newman. Miller said: "That homely, ridiculous little man had after all never ceased to struggle for a certain victory, the only kind open to him in this society – selling to achieve his lost as a man with his name and his sons' name on a business of his own" (Courseworkbank, 2004).

These words explain what he had in mind for Willy to be as he was ‘trying to achieve his lost self.’ Things that happen in business are success, wealth and esteem. This is what Ben, Willy’s dead brother, has achieved and done. Miller stressed his success and material reward in Ben. But Ben has also emptiness in spite of success. He has no reality in the eyes of the audience.

Dave Singleman is the other ideal salesman for Willy apart from his brother Ben. Willy expresses this man as a huge icon to admire when he talks to his boss Howard Wagner: “He was eighty–four years old, and he’d drummed merchandise in thirty–one states. [...] when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral” (Miller, 2002: 185–186). He also desperately wants a funeral similar to Dave’s. Dave Singleman was greatly valued, whereas Willy is not, nor is he loved as much. This marks Willy’s failure as a salesman. He has not realised demands of the business world. Willy also tells Howard in their same conversation that:

.... In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it’s all cut and dried, and there’s no chance for bringing friendship to bear—or personality. You see what I mean? They don’t know me any more. (Miller, 2002: 186)

I think that Howard Wagner treats Willy harshly because Willy has been very loyal to his business and has had no reward for his length of service. He has the feeling of being used by the firm with no appreciation. He expresses clearly this feeling to Howard: “I put thirty–four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can’t pay my insurance! You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit!” (Miller, 2002: 186). Biff says about Willy at the requiem: “He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong. [...] He never knew who he was” (Miller, 2002: 234). Biff recognises Willy’s failure as a salesman who believes in wrong values and cannot confront with reality, and himself, in American society.

Brian Parker states as a literary critic that Miller influenced from the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. He maintains that in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller follows

Ibsen's "retrospective" structure in which an explosive situation in the present is both explained and brought to a crisis by the gradual revelation of something that has happened in the past. In *Death of a Salesman*, this is Willy Loman's adultery which has destroyed the strongest value in Willy's life by alienating his son Biff. He claims that this structure is filled out with a detailed evocation of modern, urban, lower-middle-class life. Miller documents a world of arch-supports, aspirin, spectacles, subways, time payments, advertising, Chevrolets, faulty refrigerators, life insurance, mortgages and the adulation of high school football heroes. Parker stresses on Willy's handiness around the house. Parker says: "Willy's mystique of physical skill is thus a reflection of the simpler, pioneer life he craves, a symptom and a symbol of his revolt against the constraints of the modern city" (Corrigan, ed., 1969: 97).

Willy's property is so over-shadowed by apartment houses that he cannot even grow seeds in his back garden. Willy Loman is trapped in a society which prevents him from establishing anything to survive himself ruining the lives of his sons as well as his own. Parker concludes his thoughts by referring to his general indications about the play:

The futile philosophy of Willy Loman is opposed by three main alternatives in *Death of a Salesman*: the pioneering adventurousness of Ben, the sensible practicality of Charlie, and the loyalty of Linda—to list them in order of progressive importance. The values represented by Ben need not detain us very long. Their inadequacy is apparent. Miller's work, as a whole, does reflect a certain admiration for the pioneer virtues of courage and self-reliance, but this is matched by an awareness that such attitudes are dangerous in modern society: the aggressiveness which is admirable in combatting raw nature becomes immoral when turned against one's fellow men (Corrigan, ed., 1969: 104)

The most powerful and positive value is the value of family loyalty in the play. Willy loves his family, he particularly loves his older son Biff. The betrayal of this loyalty which ruins Willy's life rather than commercial failure and it is also in the name

of family love that he finally kills himself. He dies as a “father” not as a “salesman” at the end of the play.

Leonard Moss, who is an academician from Harpur College State University–New York, studies on this play. Moss considers that as a result of his discoveries about his father, Biff Loman suffers from an emotional and a moral shock experienced by numerous other literary figures including the Biblical adam and many of Shakespeare’s tragic heroes. He points out that Miller diagnoses Biff’s instability and kleptomania as a psychological illness that was initiated by the traumatic hotel–room encounter in which young Biff found his father with a woman, an illness intensified by Willy’s insistence upon commercial achievement but purged by belated insight.

He also mentions to Willy’s main problems: “Willy Loman unwittingly reveals more limitations that prevent him from attaining the success he fancies as a father and a salesman” (1967, 46). Moss maintains that Willy is a passive victim of society and Miller’s vehicle for an attack on American institutions or values. He concludes to explain his opinion about Willy: “There is hardly an American of recent years who has stood wholly ‘free and clear’ of the sources of corruption which destroyed Willy Loman and baffled his sons” (1967, 57).

J. L. Styan, who is an English literature professor, analyses form of the play in his book *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*. He indicates that the inside of the salesman’s head was to reveal a mass of contradictions. He refers to Miller’s declaration: “I wished to create a form which, in itself as a form, would literally be the process of Willy Loman’s way of mind” (1981, 117). Styan also maintains that form of *Death of a Salesman* emerged as that of the conventional two–act play but so broken into episodic fragments by lighting and spatial changes that it conveyed the free association of mind. He concludes his thoughts by discussing Miller’s own views about the form of his play:

As I look at the play now its form seems the form of a confession, for that is how it is told, now speaking of what happened yesterday, then suddenly following

some connection to a time twenty years ago, then leaping even further back and then returning to the present and even speculating about the future. (1981, 118)

Miller mingles 'realism' and 'expressionism' in *Death of a Salesman*. He uses flashback technic in which the inner feelings of Willy Loman are revealed clearly to the audience. In this way, the audience witnesses tragic feelings and thoughts of Willy, which are inside his head, step by step. For this reason, Miller gives an opportunity to audience to guess tragic end of Willy in the play as Shakespeare did it in *Hamlet* with same purpose. Willy Loman's daydreams, which reflect his mental state to audience as an expressionist aspect, are given by the playwright within the realistic atmosphere of the play including memories and experiences of Willy between past and present to reflect tragic aspect of the play. Arthur Miller acknowledges that he influenced from German expressionism when he was a student and he used it as a technic in *Death of a Salesman*. He expresses his feelings on this issue:

.... I was very moved in many ways by German expressionism when I was in school: yet there too something was perverse in it to me. [...] I learned a great deal from it. I used elements of it that were fused into *Death of a Salesman*. For instance, I purposefully would not give Ben any character, because for Willy he has no character—which is, psychologically, expressionist because so many memories come back with a simple tag on them: somebody represents a threat to you, or a promise. (Plimpton, ed., 1967: 209)

A literary critic Fred Ribkoff points out that shame and guilt plays a major role in this tragedy. Ribkoff asserts that Biff finds his identity at the end of the play through his shame for Willy's guilt and his failure in life while Willy cannot accept his guilt and he becomes an inadequate man. He explains the survival of Biff through his shame and the destruction of Willy through his inadequacy to recognise his commercial failure as a salesman and his familial failure as a father:

It is the confrontation with feelings of shame that enables Biff to find himself, separate his sense of identity from that of his father, and empathize with his

father. Moreover, it is the denial of such feelings that cripples Willy and the rest of the Loman family. (2000, 1)

He considers that shame together with the sense of inadequacy and inferiority are manifested in Loman sons and in the father as a need to prove oneself to others. He thinks that Willy's guilt, which is adultery, is caused by his feelings of shame and inadequacy. For him, Willy is driven to commit his greatest wrong by feelings of shame that arise out of his sense of inadequacy as a man. Ribkoff concludes his thoughts by referring to the real purpose of Willy that lies behind his adultery with a woman: "His adulterous affair with 'the woman' in Boston, which haunts both him and his son Biff, is a desperate attempt to confirm and maintain his self-esteem" (2000, 2). I believe that Willy perceives this woman as a device which makes him feel to be self-confident. Willy imagines that he is stronger and more self-confident when he is with this woman.

Willy Loman inherits from his father an extremely fragile sense of self-worth dependent on the perceptions of others. He is driven by feelings of inadequacy and failure to seek himself outside in the eyes of others. He pays much attention to perceptions of other people about him and his family. His adultery with a woman in Boston is caused by his feeling of inadequacy. He feels himself as a powerful salesman when he is with the woman even though he is not as he imagined himself so. Willy stresses the importance of being 'well-liked,' which shows the importance of others' values on Loman family, to his sons many times in the play. He asks Biff: "Bernard is not well liked, is he?" and Biff replies: "He's liked, but he's not well liked" (Miller, 2002: 145).

Biff recognises himself and his personality at the end of the play and he rejects the values of his father that he insists on Biff as his father believes in American dream of success. For this reason, when Biff goes to ask his former boss Bill Oliver to lend him some money to open a shop of sporting goods with his younger brother Happy, he steals Bill's pen purposefully. Then Biff reveals his intentional minor robbery to his family:

I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw—the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? (He tries to make Willy face him, but Willy pulls away and moves to the left) (Miller, 2002: 229–230)

Arthur Miller wants to open Willy Loman's head to take place inside it through his daydreams in the play. In these daydreams, Miller mingles past and present. Frank Ardolino, who is an academician from the university of Hawaii, analyses the play as a comparison between Miller's usage of 'psyche' and ancient Greeks' usage of 'fate.' He considers that Willy lives in a limited world. Willy is defeated in this world. He defines this universe as deterministic and he thinks it to be parallel to the world of Greek tragedy. According to Ardolino, Willy cannot escape the fate which he has created through deranged dreams instilled in him by his perversion of the American dream of success. Ardolino concludes his thoughts about the play by indicating the comparison of ancient Greeks' fate and Miller's usage of psyche as a modern playwright:

Miller suggests that the power of psyche is comparable to the fate represented by the omnipotent and capricious gods of Greek tragedy. For no apparent reason, Willy's psyche blinds him to the madness of his grandiose dreams of omnipotence and compels him to attempt to replace reality with his own concept of it. In other terms, it drives him to challenge the gods. His delusory fulfillment of his grandiose dreams and the punishment for his hubris come together in his act of suicide (2002, 2)

From this perspective, I regard that the concept of fate, which is a dominant element in the ancient and Elizabethan tragedies, has changed in the form of psyche or mind as a dominant factor in modern tragedy instead of ancient Greeks' fate. Characters of modern tragedy have a free will and they can direct their lives to their ends in the

way they think, and act through their minds unlike the characters of ancient Greek tragedy who are directed by their fates and religious powers to their predetermined ends. Frank Ardolino studies extensively on Willy's sons as an academic critic. He maintains that Happy, the younger son of Willy, becomes almost a reflection of Willy. His emptiness contrasts the emptiness of Willy's dreams. Ardolino asserts that while Happy is obsessed by sexuality, a parallel to his habitually telling lies which inflate and then dissolve everything to nothing, Willy's inflated dreams contrast with his reality and destroy him. He points out that Biff recognised falseness of Willy's dream and escaped from it. On the other hand, Ardolino refers to Happy as he influenced by his father's false dream: "Willy succeeded in infusing his values into Happy, the less favoured son, and in effect ruined his life" (2004, 8).

Willy Loman believes in false ideals. He does not have the strength and capacity enough to recognise that his belief in American dream of success, in a materialistic society to be successful and respectable in business life because of this commercial success in the eyes of others, finally destroys him and his family. Therefore, his major problem is that he cannot confront with himself and actualities of the life. He tries to impose his wrong ideals to his sons. Biff recognises the truth and who he is. He rejects the wrong beliefs of his father. In this way, he survives himself from a tragic end like his father's as a mature character. The audience frequently witnesses the fight of Biff against his father and his wrong belief of American dream of success in the play. Willy's advice to his sons to be 'well-liked' shows his inability to see events in a real and true way. Willy's words to his sons reflect his deluded and misguided personality:

.... Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer: "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go right through. (Miller, 2002: 145)

In this passage, I consider that Willy's advices to his sons about business world are not practical and logical in modern time. His words show his inadequacy to evaluate logically business world. He deludes himself since he sees himself as a powerful and charismatic businessman even though he knows he is not so. A literary critic Terry W. Thompson discusses Willy's words to his sons: "In these lines, Willy not only shows his ignorance of the business world but also demonstrates his sketchy knowledge of the classical myth that he alludes to" (2002, 1). Thompson also affirms that in essence Willy Loman's attempt at a praiseworthy mythological allusion turns out to be just as unskillful as his business advice. It parallels to his inability to see deeply into anything. He is inadequate in referring to ancient myth, in modern commerce or even in the demands of fatherhood.

Happy Loman is also in a delusion like his father. He deludes himself to believe that he is an assistant buyer in a department store. Biff reveals his brother's delusion during one of conversations between Happy and him: "You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?" (Miller, 2002: 229). Even though Biff, who represents the tragic side of his father, finds himself and reaches a personal maturity at the end of the play, Happy still deludes himself by owning Willy's wrong view of success. Happy tells Biff in Willy's funeral:

All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him. (Miller, 2002: 235)

Furthermore, Willy achieves an actual result in the absence of any real degree of self-knowledge or truth. In a respect, Willy experiences a sort of revelation as he finally comes to understand that the product he sells is himself. Willy ends up by fully believing in his earlier assertion to his best friend Charley through the imaginary advice of Ben: "... After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive" (Miller, 2002: 200). Willy's primary obsession

throughout the play is what he considers to be Biff's betrayal of his expectations for him.

Willy believes that he has every right to expect Biff to fulfill the promise which is inherent in him. Willy presumes that Biff's betrayal stems from his discovery of Willy's affair with a woman which is a betrayal of Linda's love and loyalty. Biff feels that Willy has betrayed him with his unending lies, whereas Willy feels that Biff has betrayed. Biff shouts Willy in a terrible mental position after he has seen him with a woman in a hotel room of Boston: "You fake! You phony little fake!" (Miller, 2002: 220). Moreover, Biff is self-conscious and realises that his life is ruined and wasted by his father's misguided directions. He also tries to make his father confront with himself and has a recognition like him. Biff furiously tells Willy that: "Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!" but Willy does not admit to confront with himself and the absolute truth that he has been failure in life. He replies Biff: "I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!" (Miller, 2002: 230).

Willy Loman has a recognition to a some extent after he was fired from his job. Beside this, I hold that Miller attacks capitalism as a system in many ways in this tragic play. One of the ways is Howard Wagner's firing Willy from his job after his long and faithful service of thirty-four years in that company. Willy is extremely upset after he has been fired from his job. He understands the wildness and mercilessness of capitalist business system and modern materialistic society. Willy Loman expresses his confused feelings in one of his dialogues with his older son Biff. In this dialogue, after his understanding of his failure in business life, Willy cannot stand seeing Biff's failure as well. This scene reveals one of the most important tragic aspects of the play:

Willy: I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today.

Biff (Shocked): How could you be?

Willy: I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that

I haven't got a story left in my head, Biff. So don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested (Miller, 2002: 208)

Willy seeks self-dignity and something more with it. What most defines the counter to the social imperative for Willy in the play is to recover the lost love of Biff and preserve his family. Willy does not want simply to fulfill the imperative for the dream's sake but he expresses his love through "success." As a divided hero, who is driven by counter imperatives, he sins against both imperatives that motivate him. He violates the law of success as Miller has explained: "the law which says that a failure in society and in business has no right to live" (Otten, 1999: 12). But he also sins against an opposing system of love which is the opposite of the law of success. Willy's tragedy and tragic end simply reflect in his failures of his imperatives which are success and love. Willy also commits adultery in a hotel room of Boston to gain access to buyers but consequently carries undeniable guilt for breaking "the law of love." He lacks intellectual awareness, therefore, he is diminished as a tragic hero but he is not morally weak.

Arthur Miller regards that without free will tragedy cannot exist. He argues the idea for tragedy that: "characters are only victims of external powers rather than participants in their own destiny" (Otten, 1999: 13). Willy is morally alive and he possesses freedom of choice. He chooses to follow the imperative that finally defeats him and he chooses to die in part to keep up the dream. Raymond Philips, who is a critic, has explained in his defence of the play as a tragedy: "... He brings tragedy down on himself, [...] not by opposing the lie, but by living it" (Otten, 1999: 13).

Willy and Biff have an interdependent relationship. Biff cannot gain freedom from his father's imperative, which is his belief in American dream of success, until his father somehow frees him from it. As tragically speaking, he can do only through death. Similarly, Willy cannot succeed until he can align his love for Biff with the dream he follows. Biff has failed to meet Willy's imperative and he feels estranged because of it; Willy has violated love for the sake of the dream by which he hoped to express it and he feels alienated as well. In this respect, the hotel room of Boston where the law of

success and the law of of love crashed by inflicting upon father and son a shared guilt that can only be redeemed by the death of the tragic hero.

Linda, the mother in the play, may be analysed as a character because she has an important place in the play. Her relationship with her husband and her sons is interesting and somehow problem. Terry Otten refers to Linda as her being in a choruslike mission which is similar to ancient Greek tragedies: “Like the Greek chorus whose plea for relief unwittingly leads to Oedipus’ tragic end, Linda’s supplications propel Willy and Biff toward their tragic destiny” (1999, 15).

Miller assigns Linda in a supportive role for Willy. She is a more logical and realistic character than Willy. But even her fierce will and love for Willy cannot save him. Kay Stanton, as a critic, dwells on an interesting point about Linda: “Miller ‘seems not to have fully understood’ her strength as a ‘common woman who possesses more tragic nobility than Willy’” (Otten, 1999: 17). Linda is filled up with outrage and protest rather than self-pity and mere perplexity. Her essential recognition, though emotionally rather than intellectually expressed, enlightens the tragic implications of the text. Even though she is powerless to prevent Willy’s tragic end, Linda is primarily responsible for generating the tragic reunion of Willy and Biff.

Biff wants to be free of the past, free of the imperative success is imposed by his father. But he cannot achieve these ends without feeling guilt for failing his father, nor can he erase from the past the estrangement that occurred in Boston for which he feels partly responsible. In this modern tragedy, moral as well psychological forces control and drive the scene. Miller points out Willy’s weakness and his inability to recognise his misguided and failed situation which is the main cause of his tragic end: “I feel that Willy Loman lacks sufficient insight into his situation, which would have made him a greater, more significant figure” (Otten, 1999: 21).

Robert Heilman, who is a literary critic, dwells on this tragic nature of Willy. Heilman maintains that *Death of a Salesman* is a near but not quite tragedy because he explains: “Willy is always in the first stage of the tragic rhythm—the flight from the

truth; but he never comes to the last stage of the tragic rhythm, in which truth breaks through to him” (Otten, 1999: 21). Miller acknowledges that the possible division in the play between the focus of the dramatic action which falls on Willy and the recognition and the moral resolution which fall on Biff. Willy gains emotional awareness of Biff’s love and consequently finds self-worth in dying for that love. There is more uncertainty, more lack of resolve at the end of the play than it is ordinarily found in most conventional tragedies.

Tragic vision does not depend on being able to predict what will happen to Biff so much as on the spectators’ awareness that Willy’s death dissolves Biff’s obligation to meet a false ideal, whatever it is concluded. What it is left with is perhaps a tragedy despite itself Willy is a victim, but chooses nonetheless; he lacks self-knowledge, but is responsible for his son’s self-awareness; his ideal is all wrong, but his commitment to it is aligned with a love he willingly dies for; his death lifts no plague and does not affect the larger community, but it rescues his family from the lasting anxiety of his death and releases Biff from a destructive imperative.

The play completes the tragic pattern of the past becoming the present and it affirms the tragic utterance that there are inevitable consequences to choices that the “wages of sin” must be paid. Lacking a singular tragic protagonist, it offers a composite figure of father and sons who embody the tragic conflict between the imperative of success and the “system of love.” Leaving society unredeemed, it ends in sacrifice to reclaim the family and restore love. Even if the play is not a “high tragedy” in Aristotelian terms, *Death of a Salesman* is more than a “low tragedy” in its revelation of tragic vision, choice, awareness and consequence. This play involves the affairs of a family rather than the affairs of a state. It is a heartbreaking family drama. The tragic hero, Willy Loman, has a personal purpose to struggle throughout the play rather than a social purpose. Miller mainly focuses on a weak and an ordinary American family from middle class and its problems. Thus *Death of a Salesman* is a typical domestic tragedy of modern time.

3.3. The Comparison of Tragic Characteristics in *Death of a Salesman* and *Hamlet*

Hamlet is generally regarded as a revenge tragedy and it is one of a series of such tragedies beginning with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Vengeance means in *Hamlet* divine justice which is supreme in the universe. In Greek tragedy the dividing-line is narrow between the judge and the avenger, the dispenser of the justice and the instrument of the justice. Hamlet requires to be reassured that such vengeance would indeed be the will of heaven. The theme of justice in vengeance generally recurs again and again in Shakespeare. *Hamlet* includes many of the characteristics for a revenge tragedy such as a ghost seeking revenge, a secret crime, a play-within-a-play, a tortured hero who feigns madness and a heroine who goes mad and commits suicide. This play focuses on a revenge that Hamlet cannot move on to act in the right time.

All revenge tragedies stem from the Greeks who wrote and performed first plays. The typical revenge tragedy, which *Hamlet* falls into, includes five typical assumptions. First, the revenge must be on an individual level against some insult or wrong. Second, the individual may not have recourse to traditional means of punishment, such as courts, because of the power of person or person's being against whom the revenge will be enacted. Third, the desire for the revenge is an internal fancy, which can only be satisfied by personally carrying out the revenge. Fourth, the revenger has to make the intended victim aware of why the revenge is being carried out. Lastly, the revenge is a universal decree that supercedes any particular religious doctrine including Christianity.

As the play is analysed through these five main criteria, it is recognised that the revenge is individually by the hero against a crime in the play, he has a strong internal fancy to kill the murderer of his father to carry out his father's demand, he acts to kill at the end of the play and this shows that his wish to take revenge of his father is clearly more dominant than religious prohibitions on him. *Hamlet* contains the typical characteristics of revenge tragedies as it is an important model of this tragic type.

In all revenge tragedies as first, and foremost, a crime is committed and for various reasons laws and justice cannot punish the crime. So the individual, who is the main character, goes through with the revenge in spite of everything. The main character then usually has a period of doubt, when he tries to decide whether or not to go through with the revenge which usually involves tough and complex planning. Other features that were typical, were the appearance of a ghost, to get the revenger to go through with the deed. The revenger has also a very close relationship with the audience through soliloquies and asides. The original crime, which will eventually be avenged, is always nearly sexual or violent, or both. The crime has been committed against a family member of the revenger. The revenger places himself outside the normal moral order of things and often becomes more isolated as the play progresses an isolation which at its most extreme becomes madness.

In revenge tragedies, the revenge is the cause of a catastrophe and the beginning of the revenge must start immediately after the crisis. After the ghost persuades the revenger to commit his deed, a hesitation first occurs and then a delay by the avenger before killing the murderer and his actual or acted out madness. The revenge must be taken out by the revenger or his trustworthy accomplices. The revenger and his accomplices may also die at the moment of success or even during the course of the revenge. *Hamlet* is a typical revenge tragedy as the popular tragic convention of the Elizabethan age since it has all characteristics of this tragic type. *Hamlet* follows quite perfectly every convention that is required to classify it as a revenge play. *Hamlet* follows very closely regular conventions for all the Elizabethan tragedies. Hamlet faces the fact that he has to avenge the murder of his father and since there is no fair justice available, he must take the law into his own hands. The ghost of his father appears to guide him to Claudius and informs Hamlet of the evil that Claudius has committed. The appearance of a ghost is an important element in the conventional revenge tragedy of the Elizabethan age. After Hamlet learns the crime of the king Claudius, he delays his revenge and always finds a way to put it off until he finally does it at the end of the play which is another element of the conventional Elizabethan revenge tragedies.

Hamlet continues to keep a close relationship with the audience with his seven main soliloquies. Adrian Brine, who is an English critic of Shakespearean drama, refers to these soliloquies as the most significant characteristics of *Hamlet* which makes the play unique. He indicates that these soliloquies give an opportunity to the audience to see Hamlet's inner feelings and those, who cannot see these aspects of him, naturally supposes him to go to mad. He also asserts that *Hamlet* cannot be imagined without these soliloquies. If *Hamlet* is imagined without soliloquies, then it becomes a rapid-developing melodrama or a demonstration which is full of the ghosts, the poisons and the duels. According to him, this characteristic, which is using soliloquies so efficiently, is a proof of Shakespeare's genius and originality. Brine concludes his opinions to stress on the importance of soliloquies in the play:

Today, we are not strongly influenced from the melodramatic side of this play which constitutes from agents, murders, and duels with poisoned-tipped swords. Unlikely, we are influenced from the hidden side of Hamlet (The secret feelings of him). What makes the play immortal is these soliloquies that have a permanent power. (Brine&York, 2000: 235–236)

C. J. Sisson, who is an English theatrical critic, informs that the audience is instructed that whatever delayed Hamlet's vengeance upon Claudius, it was not his desire to be reassured by certainty of the ghost's evidence or by redoubled certainty of the play scene that there was just cause for vengeance. He urges that such a motive was inconsistent with the character of Hamlet, a man of urban intellectuality and free from such crude passions. Sisson explains the major problem of the play in the view of people and also concludes with his own determination:

It has long been understood, of course, that the apparent problem facing Hamlet in the play is the question of the guilt of Claudius, and consequently of his duty to avenge the wrong done, upon conviction by evidence. It cannot reasonably be doubted that this was the problem which the play was intended by Shakespeare to present, and which its first actors and audiences accepted as the theme of the tragedy. But the dramatist, in his creation of the characters involved in this

action, especially of its hero, Hamlet, went far beyond the bare bones of so simple a plot. (1963, 55)

Shakespeare's major tragic figures fall into error, not through flaws, but through their virtues. A man of virtue is thrown into circumstances in which his virtue is his undoing. Hamlet is being asked, most solemnly, to do something in opposition to his essential nature; he responds in accordance with his fundamental nature. On the other hand, Hamlet is criticised and accused of behaving badly and rudely towards the female characters. Especially, he is criticised by his harsh behaviours towards Ophelia who is the tragic heroine of the play. In his relationship with her, Hamlet moves from distrust on purely general reasons that is a mere generalisation for his mother's inconstancy, which is a moral guilt of her, and his anger for his mother's marriage to his uncle Claudius. Hamlet sees this marriage as a guilty and sinful act.

Hamlet expresses frankly his generalisation of the women as their being weak and distrustful in his first soliloquy: "Frailty, thy name is woman!—" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1032). Hamlet approaches Ophelia, whom he loved passionately once, in his same doubt and distrust towards the women generally as he expresses it with his questions in his dialog between Ophelia: "Ha, ha! Are you honest? [...] Are you fair?" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1047). Hamlet cannot trust her and has to play the mad. He does so from his very first words to her. He does not trust Ophelia because he generalises all women as they are weak and distrustful. Hamlet is in a terrible mental position and he cannot think logically when he makes decisions. But just before the last scene of the play, he confesses his love for Ophelia in her grave: "I lov'd Ophelia : forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, Make up my sum" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1067).

An English literary critic Emma Smith approaches to the play from a different view and points out that: "While the character of Hamlet holds the stage throughout, as Shakespeare's longest and most demanding role, the play is not simply an individual tragedy" (Shakespeare, 1998: 107). She also argues that *Hamlet* has a political aspect. There is an unhappiness of the political situation and order. Marcellus, who is a

Danish officer in the play, reveals the political corruption in Denmark with his words to Horatio: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1036). Marcellus' words extend the tragedy into the public sphere. Therefore, alongside Hamlet's personal tragedy, it is the tragedy of a state as Denmark itself is destroyed in the violence bred in its royal house.

There are other individual tragedies except for the tragedy of Hamlet in the play. Gertrude, who unfairly loads much of the blame for events on her shoulders, is often harshly treated by critics of the play. Claudius has all the power in the court as another example of individual tragedy. Therefore, any kind of resistance by Gertrude against him is hardly seen. At the same time, Ophelia is a tragic character with her relationship towards Hamlet in the play. When Hamlet tells Ophelia that he loved her once, she says: "Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1047). And then Hamlet confesses her that he deceived her, he did not love her. Ophelia expresses bitterly her feelings which reveals her personal tragedy in a way: "I was the more deceived" (Shakespeare, 1951: 1047).

Hamlet changes throughout the play as a tragic hero. He lives a period of maturity and recognition. His maturity is a characteristic of tragic hero after a period suffering in tragedy. Hamlet has a long suffering period in which he faces a strong moral dilemma about to act or not to act. He changes in his attitude towards the death; it is at first something greatly to be desired; then in the graveyard scene he recognises that it has another side. The life is worth living even though the world is too harsh to live. Hamlet changes in his view of his duty, he is first sure that he has reasons for the revenge. Then he doubts about his reasons, confirms his reasons and seeks for the appropriate act of the revenge by meditating on the event or consequence of the action. He also changes in his view of human action itself. He is first a solitary agent who must conspire; he presently realises that others are conspiring against him at the same time and he thinks himself in an obligation to conspire more deeply.

In contrast, Willy Loman does not change largely like Hamlet. He does not reach a maturity and recognition as a typical characteristic of the modern tragic character.

Willy is a weak and an uneducated character who is a common man. He does not have the intellectual capacity to recognise what happens around him and his family. He cannot face painful realities of the life. Therefore, he cannot be successful in the eyes of others. He commits suicide and sacrifices himself for his family at the end of the play but his sacrification does not cause because of his heroic nature like Hamlet. He just commits suicide after he talks to his older son Biff and recognises that Biff loves him as a father. He commits suicide because of his love for his family. Willy Loman is a pathetic and poor modern tragic man.

Philip Edwards, as a literary critic, claims that *Hamlet*, in fact, is not a religious play but he also states that the religious element in the play gives it a distinctive tone among Shakespeare's tragedies. He also thinks that Hamlet's fear of damnation is of tremendous and unrecognised influence in the play. Edwards refers to Hamlet's hopeless and poor position when the audience first sees him at the beginning of the play. He concludes his views by saying that: "Hamlet when we first meet him is in a state of despair. He longs for death, and would take his own life if suicide were not forbidden by divine decree" (Coyle, ed., 1992: 23).

Hamlet is created by five major technical triumphs as a work of dramatic art. The triumphs are Shakespeare's usage of the ghost, the device of presenting the play *The Murder of Gonzago* before the court, the way in which themes of love and death, involving both Gertrude and Ophelia, are united in the graveyard scene, the way in which the final duel unites the military imagery and the imagery of poison, and finally, the entire creation of the mind and consciousness of Hamlet. Shakespeare dramatises the past, provides dramatic conflict in the present and prepares a satisfying but an unexpected future resolution of that conflict by these methods.

Hamlet is a typical Elizabethan revenge tragedy. It follows conventions of a revenge tragedy of the Elizabethan age. After I have put forward in a detailed way tragic characteristics of *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan revenge tragedy, I see it as a necessity to mention extensively to tragic characteristics of *Death of a Salesman* as a modern

domestic tragedy in this comparison section of the third chapter before my final conclusion.

Death of a Salesman focuses on American dream. This dream consists of a genuine and determined belief that in America, all things are possible to men, regardless of birth or wealth; people work hard enough, they achieve anything. However, Miller tries to explain in this play that people are ‘ultimately misguided.’ To be hard-working, honest and have ambition were the ways of American dream. This led to success, wealth and in due time–power. But this dream developed for everyone and encouraged greed, selfish behaviour, pride and rivalry between each other.

Willy Loman was ‘caught up’ in this American dream. It causes business to develop in the world. Capitalism and also the profit of motive, and competitive instinct, make Willy have a weakness in his personality. This weakness was caused by a combination of business pressures. Willy wants to prove himself through successes as a salesman but as he fails, his own life destroys him. Willy tells his wife Linda at the beginning of the play: “I’m the New England man. I’m vital in New England” (Miller, 2002: 128). I presume that Willy is insecure and is not the successful businessman as he says he is.

Biff is obviously the most sensible member of Loman family. He recognises his and his father’s failures. His failure is caused by his father’s wrong and misguided beliefs and attitudes. Biff loves his father at the beginning of the play. But when he recognises his father’s adultery with a strange woman in a hotel room of Boston, he starts to hate his father because of his unloyalty to his wife and family. He quits high school and leads a miserable and worthless life. He rejects the notion of American dream and takes control of his life, whereas Happy, the younger son of Willy, remains stuck in the ideology of American dream at the end like his father. Happy cannot accept reality much like his father. Biff blames Willy for his failure in life and expresses the guiltiness of Willy in one of their conversations:

Biff: You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in Jail

Willy: I suppose that's my fault!

Biff: I stole myself out of every good job since high school!

Willy: And whose fault is that?

Biff: And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is ! (Miller, 2002: 229)

Willy's best friend Charley is used by Miller as the symbol of success within the boundaries of American dream. Charley is the typical man that American society wants to see. He has his own business and he is a successful businessman. He has realised that Willy's view of success is seriously flawed. Charley tells Willy: "... The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that" (Miller, 2002: 200). As Willy cannot sell anything, he has got nothing. Willy has lost his all self-respect. Willy has been a failure in life. But he feels even more so because success in the American dream is available to anyone. This figure has significantly effected his family, especially, his sons. Biff is just as hopeless as Willy in many ways. *Death of a Salesman* is a modern tragedy. Willy Loman is a tragic figure. All his life has been totally unpredictable. Although Willy is always 'falling,' the audience sympathises with him.

John Mason Brown, who is a critic, refers to this play as a modern tragedy. He says: "Miller's play is a tragedy modern, and personal, not classic and heroic; its central figure is a little man sentenced to discover his smallness rather than a big man undone by his greatness" (Courseworkbank, 2004). Linda, who is the wife of Willy, is a loyal wife. She supports Willy in his wrong battle with the life even if she recognises that Willy believes in wrong values or without recognising the truth. She defends her husband against her sons' accusations about their fathers, especially against Biff's accusations, many times in the play. When Biff tells his mother Linda that Willy has no 'character,' she defends her husband Willy strongly:

I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be paid to such a person (Miller, 2002: 164–165)

Linda admires Willy as though his temper, his massive dreams and his little cruelties. But she is insensitive against her older son Biff. She does not support him for his attitudes and often cries out him. She tells Biff: “Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him (Willy), then you can't have any feeling for me. [...] Either he's your father and you pay him that respect, or else you're not to come here” (Miller, 2002: 164). At this point, a resemblance may be found between Linda and Gertrude in relation to their problem relationships with their sons as the mothers of both play. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Gertrude does not have any kind of sensitivity and compassion against her son prince Hamlet. Similarly, such a problem exists in the relationship of Linda with her son Biff in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. American society imposes wrong values on Loman family through American dream and these values also degenerate family affairs in Loman house. The more Lomans fail to fulfill the expectations of a wild society outside their house, the more problems they have in their household and family affairs.

Willy and Biff are presented as the symbols of failure, whereas Charley and his son Bernard are presented as the symbols of success by Miller in the play. Biff failed in mathematics, whereas Bernard got all the correct results he needed for college and he became a top lawyer. Bernard has a case in front of the supreme court. This is also a symbol that is used by Miller to show the success of Bernard to the audience. Willy thinks that personality is very important in business world. He focuses on the term of being ‘well-liked,’ he does not find Bernard as being ‘well-liked.’ Thus he cannot understand why Bernard is successful while Biff is a failure in life. Willy reveals his lack of understanding about this issue in one of his conversations with Bernard who is the son of his friend Charley: “Willy: How—how did you? Why didn't he ever catch on? [...] Bernard: He never trained himself for anything” (Miller, 2002: 195). Willy has

a worse life as a salesman and he is a failure because of this 'American Dream.' In contrast, Charley has a highly-paid and reputable job and he is successful.

Willy cannot confront with realities of modern life and lives in wrong dreams. Miller used the flashbacks as an expressionist technic to show the inner feelings of Willy to the audience as Shakespeare used soliloquies in *Hamlet* with the same intention. Miller said about the daydreams of Willy in which he combines the past and present: "There are no flashbacks in the play but only a mobile concurrency of past and present... because in his desperation to justify his life, Willy Loman has destroyed the boundaries between now and then" (Courseworkbank, 2004). *Death of a Salesman* contains much that is critical of modern American society. But this was not Arthur Miller's only purpose in writing it. Miller demonstrated Willy's misjudgement of his failure in life in *Death of a Salesman*. He feels as though he has failed because he has no fortune to show for it in either his or his sons' names. What he has truly failed in his family and marriage life that is the corruption of the true 'American Dream.'

J. L. Styan as an English literary critic points out that Willy Loman has a salesman's competitive philosophy. He thinks that Willy needs to believe his own values. According to him, the episodic structure of the play builds a contrast between Willy's romantic images of the past and the hard reality of the present. Styan referred to the tragic structure of the play with Miller's own views:

Miller explained that in writing *Death of a Salesman*, he did not set out to write a tragedy, or to measure Willy's stature by any Greek, or Elizabethan standards for a tragic hero. In the modern age, social rank did not determine the tragic experience; rather, 'the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as Kings were.' What mattered was the conscious experience of the central character in his pride, and dignity. Willy Loman had broken the law of success in society, a law without which life was insupportable, and the audience's reaction was not to be 'What happens next and why?' So much as 'Oh, God, of course!' (1981, 144)

In this passage, what Styan tries to explain by referring to Miller's views is in the way that modern tragedy has changed so much as different from the Elizabethan tragedy in terms of an "evolution" as this thesis puts forward. The most important evolution occurs in the tragic hero who has changed from a noble and an intellectual character of the Elizabethan tragedies to a lower-middle-class, an ordinary and an uneducated man of the modern tragedies who is not in the status of a hero any more. I claim that the 'religious universe' of the Elizabethan age has turned into the 'secular universe' of the modern time as another major tragic evolution.

Although Styan informs that Miller did not have the intention to write a tragedy, *Death of a Salesman* had tragic characteristics chiefly in the context of a suicide of a poor man who is smashed by a materialistic society and its pressure on this single individual who cannot handle with this heavy load. Moreover, the most remarkable aspect of this play, which makes it the greatest tragedy of modern age, is that this tragedy is not only Willy Loman's but it is also all human beings' who cannot fulfill greedy expectations of a totally materialistic, capitalist society and business world. Therefore, this play cannot be ignored as a tragedy since it has such a comprehensive tragic element which may find a reflection in all humanity.

Arthur Miller explained the form and structure of his play. Miller affirmed that he set out not to write a tragedy and called *Death of a Salesman* as a 'slippery play' to categorise. He defended it against some attacks upon it as a false tragedy: "I need not claim that this is a genuine solid-gold tragedy for my opinions on tragedy to be held valid" (Otten, 1999: 2). He responded to a question of whether or not *Death of a Salesman* was a Sophoclean tragedy by asserting: "I think it does endanger tragic feelings, at least in a lot of people. Let's say it's one kind of tragedy. I'm not particularly eager to call it tragedy or anything else; the label doesn't matter to me" (Otten, 1999: 2). He also acknowledged that the main tragic aspect of his plays is his characters' inability to face themselves gives rise to tragic consequences as in the example of Willy Loman. A critic Alvin Whitley warned Miller to realise about the tragic understanding of him:

He is extending the traditional interpretation [of tragedy] to embrace demonstrably different emotional effects. [...] “in the basic matter of personal dignity, Willy Loman may have ended where Hamlet unquestionably began.” (Otten, 1999: 4)

Terry Otten, who is an academician from university of Texas, discusses that Miller both creates a naturalistic, almost ‘Marxist’ view of American culture in the post depression era and he states that Miller’s dramatic style has been reduced by some critics to social determinism. Otten maintains that the truth is Miller does describe Willy as a childlike victim of the cultural values he adopts virtually without question. He believes that Miller creates Willy as a true believer in the American dream of success. Otten refers to Miller’s words about a tragic hero: “The less capable a man is of walking away from the central conflict of the play, the closer he approaches a tragic existence” (Otten, 1999: 9). Ironically, like the King Oedipus, who at every insists on fulfilling his obligation as the king by unwittingly searching for his own father’s murderer even though it finally destroys him to do so, Willy Loman unreservedly follows his imperative to its fatal end, similarly encouraged by all others around him to abort his quest; Linda, Biff and Happy, Charley and Bernard all urge him to give up, just Teiresias, the Chorus, Jocasta and the Shepherd beg of Oedipus to do the same.

That Willy does not finally understand corruptness of the dream exposes his intellectual failure but he dies in defence of the imperative that consumes him. Otten argues that it would be absurd to argue Willy’s tragic stature on the grounds of his innocent and misguided commitment to the American dream of success, even though his devotion to the system is not less consuming than Oedipus’ or Hamlet’s commitment to their imperatives. Otten explains Willy Loman’s imperatives in relation to prince Hamlet and king Oedipus in a comparative way:

.... At a deeper level we must ask why he invests so totally and self-destructively in support of the dream. For Oedipus or Hamlet, of course, the moral imperative was a given—there was divine order, after all, a divinity that shapes human destiny. For Willy, however, the imperative was not so readily

apparent or universally acclaimed. His fierce devotion to it was not for its own sake, but rather it was for Willy a means to an end (1999, 10)

Willy as a modern tragic hero has different imperative forces on himself unlike the Elizabethan hero who has religious imperatives. Furthermore, Willy is not created in a heroic status like Hamlet and he cannot handle with his imperative, which is the social pressure to be successful and respectable through commercial success in a merciless and capitalist business world. He could not restore the corrupted American society and business world of modern time as Hamlet did in the state of Denmark at the end of his tragedy. Thus he could not die for his divine purpose as well since he is not a powerful tragic hero like Hamlet in the sense of an Elizabethan tragedy.

The evolution of basic tragic characteristics in both plays will be comparatively discussed as representatives of the Elizabethan and modern tragedies in this last part of the third chapter. This comparison is also convenient to the main aim of this thesis. To begin with, it is necessary to refer to Arthur Miller, who is the major American dramatist of twentieth century, and his unforgettable regards about the tragic consideration and differences between the classical and modern tragedies. Miller answers to a question if he considers his plays as modern tragedies or not. He also maintains with his answer to an absolute fact that an immediate comparison between classical and modern tragedies is not possible:

I changed my mind about it several times. I think that to make a direct or arithmetical comparison between any contemporary work and the classic tragedies is impossible because of the question of religion and power, which was taken for granted and is an a priori consideration in any classic tragedy (Plimpton, ed., 1967: 203)

A direct comparison between the Elizabethan and modern tragedies is so difficult and it is even impossible because values and imperative forces have changed in mankind. In this context, I will try to mention similar and different elements in tragic

characteristics of both tragedies in terms of an evolution as this thesis aims at proving them.

The concept of tragic hero has changed from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy throughout the time. The modern tragic hero has shifted to the ordinary and uneducated character, who is a common salesman from middle class, in *Death of a Salesman*, while the Elizabethan hero was a noble and an intellectual character, who was a Danish prince, in *Hamlet*. As societies have shifted from upper class of the Elizabethan time to middle class of modern time, tragic hero has lost his nobility and declined from upper class to middle class throughout the time. From this angle, Hamlet is a tragic hero who is an intellectual member of upper class. Unlikely, Willy Loman is a tragic character who has not the strength of a tragic hero and he is an uneducated member of middle class. *Hamlet* is an Elizabethan revenge tragedy which has all conventions of high tragedy. It contains a social affair of the state. On the contrary, *Death of a Salesman* is a modern domestic tragedy that contains a personal affair of a family rather than an affair of the state since this kind of tragedy emerged from the needs of modern society.

The imperatives, which have a pressure on tragic hero and direct him to his tragic end, are religious and moral forces like gods in *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan tragedy, whereas such forces are social and materialistic forces like the dream of success in *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy. As society becomes middle class, its values are materialistic like the ideology of ‘American dream’ in modern tragedies; while the values of society are religious and virtuous characteristics in the classical and Elizabethan tragedies. Arthur Miller declares that society is the only characteristic of modern time that has a connection with classical time. He dwells on the fact that people have no sense of divinity in modern time and he asserts that this is the reason why tragic understanding has been worsened nowadays. He maintains about society that: “By society, I don’t mean, of course, merely the government. It is the whole way we live, what we want from life and what we do to get it” (Otten, 1999: 6).

The main point, in effect, is that in a secular universe the moral centre shifts to the individual in relationship to his social environment. At this level, I consider that the

universe has changed from a religious cosmology of the Elizabethan tragedies to a secular cosmology of the modern tragedies since divinity leaves its place to a social determination as the medium of administration.

In *Death of a Salesman*, society assumes the role of gods to whom Willy shows loyalty. It constitutes an “imperative” as an obligation to a given, externally located system that forces tragic hero to act in direct opposition to an opposing imperative which is characterised as a personal desire. Ironically, gods of Willy are more different than traditional gods since Miller changes and symbolises them as supreme commercial directors. The differences that emerge in modern tragedy are that social forces usurp the role of gods and they change tragedy deeply but not unrecognisably. Miller has called such emergences as: “‘the tragedy of displacement’ in which ‘the tragic dimension’ surfaces in the protagonist’s struggle for a lost ‘personal identity’ displaced by ‘the social mask’” (Otten, 1999: 8).

There are two different imperatives in *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy. The imperative of success in direct competition with the personal imperative of finding the authentic self within the tragic conflict. A similar situation exists in *Hamlet* that the imperatives are more different than this modern tragedy. The imperative of divine power and the personal imperative of finding himself besides the absolute truth to reveal around him in the play are different imperatives in *Hamlet*. The differences of imperatives in both plays create a tragic conflict.

The tragic conflict generates tensions between inner and outer worlds of Hamlet and Willy, between them as a hero and a psychological case study, between social commentary and personal experience, between the socially accepted view of morality and personal guilt, between suicide and self-sacrifice. At the same time, the matters are disconnected from the larger human society or a spiritually charged universe in Loman family s a characteristic of modern family structure, even though Shakespeare’s heroes, like Hamlet, engage in a psychological battle at some personal level, they all see themselves as primarily members of the larger community.

The concept of 'battle' has also been shifted throughout the time as a tragic characteristic. Tragic battle occurs between Hamlet and religious powers to restore divine order in Denmark in *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan tragedy, while this battle occurs between Willy and social forces to save his family from destruction in *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy. Tragic battle has shifted from traditional violent wars of the Elizabethan tragedies to psychological wars of modern tragedies. Hamlet is defeated by divinity at the end of the play but in fact, he is victorious since he sacrificed himself for his purpose.

The concepts of 'victory' and 'defeat' in *Hamlet* have turned towards the concepts of 'success' and 'failure' in *Death of a Salesman*. Willy did not succeed to be a wealthy and respectable businessman in the eyes of a materialistic society and he failed in business life. He was also not an ideal father and husband because of his wrong belief in American dream of success and he failed as a father, too. But, in fact, he is successful as father and salesman because he recognised his older son Biff's love for him and sacrificed himself for the sake of his family at the end of the play. Hamlet revolts against religious powers as an Elizabethan tragic characteristic, while Willy Loman revolts against social powers as a modern tragic characteristic.

The murder of old Hamlet and other bloody murders as concrete guilts are characteristics of an Elizabethan tragedy in *Hamlet*. The adultery of Willy Loman with a woman as an abstract guilt and immoral act is also a modern tragic characteristic. The concept of 'guilt' in tragedy as a characteristic has changed from a functional, concrete crime of the Elizabethan plays to a symbolic, an abstract crime of the modern plays. The suicide of Willy, which is a self-sacrifice in a sense, is similar to the death of Hamlet which is also a self-sacrifice. After the guilts, a 'tragic atmosphere' is created as another major tragic characteristic.

Tragic atmosphere is created by the murders and death of its protagonist by sacrificing himself for his purpose in *Hamlet*, whereas it is created by an adultery, immoral act and suicide of Willy in *Death of a Salesman*. The tragic heroes have tragic consciousness or knowledge at the end of both tragedies as a result of their sufferings.

Hamlet and Willy Loman have a 'tragic knowledge' after they have suffered so much. Hamlet fights for a social purpose in the play. He sacrifices himself to purify the social and moral order as the representative of god in Denmark. Nevertheless, Willy struggles for a personal purpose. He sacrifices himself for his family to save them and provide them with better economic conditions in a materialistic and capitalist American society. Hence after Hamlet suffers for his state and Willy suffers for his family, both of them have a tragic knowledge and recognition. They sacrifice themselves as a result of their tragic recognitions of the facts.

Finally, the ordinary man of modern tragedy, Willy Loman who is not a hero any more, was buried silently after his death without any ceremony and public mourning, while the noble character of the Elizabethan tragedy, Hamlet, was publicly mourned and buried after his death with a military ceremony. Furthermore, the modern tragic hero Willy Loman's funeral is so simple with only attendance of his family and his friend Charley unlike the magnificent and crowded funeral of the Elizabethan tragic hero Hamlet. To conclude this last chapter, I must affirm that tragedy and its major tragic characteristics have had an "evolution" throughout the time from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis has examined William Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in the context of their tragic characteristics and evolution of these characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy throughout the time. This study of the Elizabethan and modern tragic characteristics is based on two major works of tragic literature as these works are in the quality of masterpieces in the literature of the world. I have tried to present the evolution of the tragic characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy in a comparative style particularly in the last section of the third in this thesis. The current study has analysed extensively tragic characteristics in the way which characteristics have changed, how they have changed and how the tragic understanding has changed from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy. I aim at providing to the reader a deep information about tragedy as a theatrical form. This study frequently refers to Shakespeare and Miller with their tragic plays which constitute the major concern of this thesis in analysing the evolution of tragic characteristics.

This thesis has described and also criticised the moral aspect of *Hamlet* and the social aspect of *Death of a Salesman* in different ways. Not only these two particular tragic plays, but also has the ancient Greek tragedy been scrutinised during tragic discussion of this thesis to form an extensive variety of the subjects on tragedy as convenient to the essential purpose of this thesis. Through the discussion of these tragic plays, I have tried to fulfill comparatively the research of tragic characteristics. The chapters have been written as related to each other and each chapter has referred to a particular aspect of the main discussion of the thesis on the basis of tragedy in its complete form.

The first chapter has mainly concerned with tragic characteristics which are needed to make a distinction between a tragedy and other literary forms. This extensive information about tragedy has constructed an adequate knowledge to recognise it and compare effectively its characteristics. This chapter has also scrutinised

important periods of tragic development throughout the time as far as they have been concerned with the central theme the thesis, starting from ancient Greek, then to England of the Elizabethan age and lastly referring to the American drama of twentieth century. The first chapter has represented that tragedy firstly appeared in the religious structure of ancient Greek and remained within the limited frame of moral values rather than being a literary work.

The second chapter has analysed Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an Elizabethan revenge tragedy. This chapter has aimed at presenting Shakespeare's contributions to the form of tragedy and referring to the influence of ancient Greek on him. The discussion, which has been introduced deeply in the first chapter, has developed in a better way in the context of stating to *Hamlet* which is possibly the most impressive tragedy among other examples of the Elizabethan tragic art. In this respect, the second chapter has demonstrated Shakespeare's genius and innovation as an Elizabethan playwright. At the same time, this chapter has formed a basis to evaluate truly the tragic structure of a typical Elizabethan tragedy in order to construct a potential to compare the Elizabethan work of this chapter with the modern work of the next chapter.

The third chapter has comprehensively scrutinised Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* as a modern domestic tragedy. It has also mainly concerned with Miller's innovations in the tragic form even without caring that he is writing tragedies. Moreover, this chapter refers to Shakespeare's influence on Miller in the positive and negative ways as a result of a natural interest of the topic in a larger view for this thesis which researches Shakespeare's influence on American drama. I have tried to show this topic in relation to the main theme of the current thesis. The main discussion, which has been kept systematically throughout the two former chapters, has been carried on strongly in this last chapter through referring to *Death of a Salesman* as probably the most successful and remarkable tragic work of the twentieth century American drama.

I have referred mostly Arthur Miller as a modern playwright, Karl Jaspers as a modern critic and Terry Otten as a modern academician in the present thesis with their influential indications. The third chapter has shown Arthur Miller's creativity and

originality with his revolutionary contributions to modern tragedy. Finally, this last chapter has completed the central assertion of this thesis by representing the differences of tragic vision and characteristics between the Elizabethan and modern tragedy, particularly, with the comparative technic of the last section of this chapter.

In the study of *Hamlet* and *Death of a Salesman*, the major conclusion is drawn through the main characteristic and subject of tragedy throughout the time. Tragedy emerged in a moral and religious characteristic in ancient Greek. The ancient Greek tragedians aimed at showing that man's acts and thoughts were controlled by gods in this world. Furthermore, it is in the ancient Greek tragedy that man as a mortal existence is weak, he cannot reach beyond his limited vision and self. Thus this means that the central theme of ancient Greek tragedy was based on the concept of 'fate' and the notion of inevitable fate of human beings that were determined by gods.

Although Shakespeare mostly influenced from the ancient Greek tragic convention and followed it obviously in *Hamlet*, he contributed to tragedy with his main innovation that is the free will of human thoughts against the inescapable fate of ancient Greeks. He gave some amount of autonomy to his characters to choose their own destiny and suffer as a result of their choices through their minds as it is in the example of Hamlet. But I still see that Shakespearean tragedy has also a moral and religious characteristic, whereas Arthur Miller changed the tragic vision and conventions of the classical and Elizabethan tragedies. Miller used his own style, survived tragic atmosphere from the religious determination and brought the modern tragedy into a secular atmosphere in which man is restricted within the limitations of a social pressure of success from now on.

I have some main indications as general conclusions of this study in the context of tragic evolution from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy at this point. Firstly, the tragic hero and society he lives have been middle class in modern tragedy unlike the hero and his society of upper class in the Elizabethan tragedy. Secondly, imperative forces of the tragic hero have become a materialistic society and business world in a secular universe of modern tragedy unlike the divine powers of the Elizabethan tragedy

in a religious universe. Thirdly, the purpose of the tragic hero to struggle throughout tragedy has become individual and familial in modern tragedy unlike the social purpose of the hero in the Elizabethan tragedy. Fourthly, the central values in the tragic battle have become success and failure in modern tragedy unlike the main values of victory and defeat in the Elizabethan tragedy.

The tragic hero struggles against the social and materialistic that only respect to success, career and money in modern tragedy, whereas the tragic hero struggles against the moral and religious that only respect to victory and revenge in the Elizabethan tragedy. Tragic characteristics have been clearly represented as convenient to the changes of tragic characteristics from the Elizabethan to modern tragedy in this thesis in the examples of the tragic heroes who are a prince Hamlet from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and an ordinary salesman Willy Loman from Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

This thesis does not claim to fill in a huge gap in the field of tragic studies but it tries to put another brick to the wall of it. The current thesis has demonstrated that William Shakespeare is a creative and an innovative playwright but the main concern of his tragedies is not social as this is clearly seen in *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's tragedies were addressed to upper-class families. The tragic characters, families, backgrounds and subjects were the characteristics of upper class in *Hamlet*. Hence ordinary people from middle class could not find a matter of interest for themselves in this play.

On the contrary, Arthur Miller changed the usual conventions of the Elizabethan tragedy. Miller used the ordinary man Willy Loman, who had been scorned by the classical and Elizabethan tragedians, and his problems in a wild, materialistic society as the main concern of modern tragedy. Thus Miller has turned tragedy into the art which draws the attention of ordinary people from low and middle classes in modern time. He proved that the main concern of a tragedy may be a family drama in a greedy and materialistic society, which tries to exploit an ordinary family for its merciless capitalist purposes under its ideology of "American dream of success," through his successful usage of Loman family in *Death of a Salesman*. For these reasons, Arthur Miller is a

major contemporary American playwright who has modernised tragedy and has become a revolutionary playwright.

The ultimate conclusion of the present thesis is that tragedy and its essential characteristics have changed throughout the time like all the other literary forms because tragedy has to change as a natural result of the social values which have changed during the time. There are not any “kingdoms,” “dynasties,” “royal families,” “kings,” “princes” and “courts” today as they exist in the Elizabethan era and in *Hamlet*. In contrast, there are “ordinary people,” “middle-class societies,” “simple houses,” “common salesman” and “ordinary families” in modern time as they exist in *Death of a Salesman*. Therefore, the classical and Elizabethan issues cannot be accepted as the concern of a few tragedies that are written in this modern age.

To conclude, I think that tragedy should be addressed to the majority of the society which are low and middle classes today, tragedy should not be addressed to the minority of the society which is upper class. *Death of a Salesman*, which occupies with a tragic family drama, deserves to be more than a low tragedy as a modern domestic tragedy. Besides this, *Hamlet*, which concerns with the moral dilemma of a noble character, is definitely an Elizabethan revenge tragedy and it is also a traditional high tragedy.

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