

## A Comparative Study of Tragic Heroes in Two Plays of Shakespeare and Miller

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### Abstract:

*The present paper attempts to put comparative study between Shakespeare's and Miller's tragic heroes in the two plays Hamlet and Death of Salesman. I try to focus on three aspects psychosocial, social and Linguistically aspects for tragic heroes through the presentation of characters Hamlet and Willy Lowman. Also it may be a resource for critical theory and analysis which be helpful for future research scholars and playwrights to shape new dimensions of writing.*

*The reason of selected topic for the study is to understand Shakespeare's and Miller's view of tragic heroes thought the study of characteristic tragic heroes in their plays. The tragic hero figures in Shakespeare's and Miller's tragedies are believed to be prominent, vital and progressive following the writer's mental and spiritual change.*

**Key words:** Hamlet, Death of a Salesman, tragic heroes, Arthur Miller, William Shakespeare.

### The role of Tragic Heroes in the Plot development of Tragedies:

**Tragedy is a part of life if not life as such:** Klein, in his book, *Tragedy* said that tragedy is a form of drama, story or novel based on human suffering that invokes in its audience an

accompanying catharsis or pleasure in the viewing (Klein, *Tragedy*, p. 163). Then we can say that Tragedy, as form of art, is an echo of culture and can also figure culture. The term "tragedy" has morphed over the centuries, first meaning an artistic translation of conflicts and fear, and later meaning a sad or sorrowing event. We get that there are many critics reject connections between the two. It seems that the tragedy in art separate from tragedy in life, but so much of life that is sorrowful has been transferred directly into dramatic tragedy and certainly there must be a connection between the two. The first real tragedy story in history of human being was happened between two brothers, Cain and Abel, who were Adam's sons. Cain killed his brother, Abel, because the jealousy. This is real story embodies the conflict of human. The dramatically tragedy embodies through story of Oedipus, how Oedipus himself killed his father and then married his mother. The tragedy progresses form art, to life with an echo of art, to life. The tragedy is a part of life as the happy and beauty are so, the two are to complete the life, as Edgar Poe depict that *'Beauty and love often become complete in death'*. Therefor the tragedy created with the first man, Adam, to present day. Or the Tragedy drama may be form Oedipus as tragic hero to Lowman Willy. The tragedy is a form of art based on human suffering that offers its audience pleasure. The origins of tragedy are unclear, but the art form certainly developed out of the poetic. According to Aristotle, 'the Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action and life, of happiness and misery. And life consists of action, and its end is a mode of activity, not a quality' (Dr.S.Sen, Aristotle's Poetics p. 45). Now character governs men's qualities, but it is their action that makes them happy or gloomy. The purpose of action in the tragedy, therefore, is not the representation of character: character comes in as contributing to the action. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of the tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be one without character. 'The plot, then, is the first

principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: character holds the second place. Religious is the structure of the ideal tragic plot and spends several chapters on its require .Aristotle says that 'the plot must be a complete whole, with a definite beginning, middle, and end , and its length should be such that the spectators can comprehend without difficulty both its separate parts and its overall unity. Moreover, the plot involves a single central theme in which all the elements are logically related to establish the change in the hero's fortunes, with emphasis on the dramatic causation and probability of the events. Aristotle has relatively less to say about the tragic hero because the incidents of tragedy are often beyond the hero's control or not closely related to his personality' (*Dr.S.Sen, Aristotle's Poetics, p 88*). The plot is intended to illustrate matters of cosmic rather than individual significance, and the protagonist is viewed primarily as the character who experiences the changes that take place. This stress placed by the Greek tragedians on the development of plot and action at the expense of character, and their general lack of interest in exploring psychological motivation, is one of the major differences between ancient and modern drama, and their general lack of interest in exploring psychological motivation, is one of the major differences between ancient and modern drama' (Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy, p 77*). Since the aim of a tragedy is to arouse pity and fear through an alteration in the status of the central character, he must be a figure with whom the audience can identify and whose fate can trigger these emotions. Aristotle says that 'pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves' (S. Sen, *Aristotle's Poetics p .54*). He surveys various possible types of characters on the basis of these premises, the idea protagonist as a man who is highly renowned and prosperous, but one who is not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgment or frailty; a personage

like Oedipus. According that, it may be the important thing which must note that there are unique elements of tragedy as following:

·The Tragic hero: an articulate, social authority, someone who is "important" within his society; this hero has at least one weakness or fault-tragic hero which during the course of the drama grows until it overcomes his virtues and leads to his downfall and the destruction of his word.

·Chorus : borrowed from Greek tragedy in which dancers/ singers appear at intervals within the play to comment on the action, express objective judgment on the proceeding' (Charles H. Reeves, *The Aristotelian Concept of The Tragic Hero* p .70- 74).

Hence the tragic hero is soul of a tragedy, therefore it should stop at the tragic hero. 'The tragic hero should not offend the moral sensibilities of the audiences, and as 'a character he must be true to type ,true to life an consistent ,The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but reversely, form good to bad'(Dr.S.Sen,*Aristotle's Poetics* p .132) .

**Shakespeare's tragic hero:** Shakespeare as Renaissance writer his tragedy derives less form medieval tragedy than from the Aristotelian notion of the tragic flaw, a moral weakness or human error that causes the protagonist's downfall. Unlike classical tragedy, however, it tends to include subplots and comic relief. From Seneca, early Renaissance tragedy borrowed the "violent and bloody plots, resounding rhetorical speeches, the frequent use of ghosts. In his greatest tragedies, for example, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare transcends the conventions of Renaissance tragedy, imbuing his plays with a timeless universality.' Shakespearean's tragic hero: In classical tragedy, a man in a high position whose actions therefore have widespread consequences. He is of greater than average qualities, usually of surpassing physical attractiveness and personal qualities.

However, he possesses a tragic flaw, which combines with circumstances to lead him to make an error in judgment that leads inevitably to his downfall. He becomes possessed of hubris, arrogance, and is struck down by nemesis or the agents of nemesis. He has become gradually isolated and he dies in the catastrophe. The audience, which has undergone a catharsis of pity and fear, feels a deep sense of waste. The hero is somehow redeemed at the end and the audience feels that things have turned out as they were meant to'(S.H. Butcher, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p.66-70.)Therefore we can say that 'William Shakespeare is the leading dramatist in history and wrote the plays against which all subsequent dramatic writing has been measured. Shakespeare's tragedies generally follow the demands of the Aristotelian view of the tragic hero, though Shakespeare does bend some of the Aristotelian "rules" when he believes it is necessary to accomplish his purpose'(Charles H. Reeves, *The Aristotelian Concept of The Tragic Hero* p .78). An examination of several of his tragedies will show how he achieves his dramatic effects in terms of the definition of the tragic hero. The tragic hero derives from the Greek drama, as elucidated by the criticism of Aristotle in particular. 'Tragedy in this conception is struggling against something over which it really have no control, and the tragedy develops from a recognition of the futility of the struggle, leading to the resignation of the tragic hero to his or her fate and indeed even to their embracing that fate'( Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*. p, 65)The hero takes responsibility for his or her failure, this is the lesson learned and imparted to the audience and only reinforces the power of the gods and the need for the human spirit to obey. Underlying the actions of the tragic hero is a fatal flaw in his character, and it is because of this flaw that he is not able to escape his fate. The flaw is usually a form of pride, but it need not be. As developed by Shakespeare, the flaw and its consequences can be seen to take different forms in different plays and always to emphasize both the blindness of

the hero in not seeing what is happening to him'. Through our reading Aristotle's rules for the tragic hero can say that the characteristics of Shakespearean Tragic Hero are following:

1. ' He must be a person of some stature or high position such as a king, general, or nobleman.
2. He must be basically a good person. He must matter to us and we must see him as a worthwhile person
3. Because of his position, his actions usually have far-reaching effects.
4. He must possess a character trait or quality which under normal circumstances would be a virtue, but which under the special circumstances of the play proves to be a fatal flaw.
5. Although a great man, he often shows promise of further greatness.
6. Frequently, he makes serious errors in judgment which lead him to committing the deed which begins his downfall.
7. He must be ultimately responsible for the deed which begins his downfall.
8. He usually makes further errors in judgment following his misdeed.
9. Often he has a distorted perception of, or is blind to reality.
10. He frequently commits further crimes which precipitate his downfall.
11. He suffers both outwardly (isolation, alienation, attacks) and inwardly (tortured conscience).
12. He must elicit both pity and fear from the audience (catharsis).
13. Usually he recognizes his mistakes.
14. He must die'(S.H. Butcher, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p. 45-47).

**Arthur Miller's Tragic Hero:** The Common Man; it still associates tragedy with the highborn and their plights. However, Arthur Miller stimulates the minds by explaining that a tragic hero can and should include the common man. He

defines 'a tragic hero as one who attempts to "gain his 'rightful' position in his society" and in doing so, struggles for his dignity' (Miller, *Tragedy and common man*). Willy Lowman is a tragic hero despite Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero being of royal status and "arouses our pity" through his pitfalls. It didn't seem that the common man could also be a tragic hero because his misfortunes would not be too extreme and should be expected. But Arthur Miller points out that considering the noble's hardships does not seem to excite the modern audience. Perhaps better understanding a true tragic hero would soon make up for the lack of tragedies written in this age, as Miller complain. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* gives a perfect example of tragedy in the common man with the character Willy Lowman, who, in his fear of being displaced, his struggle to fix his problems, and in his death as a plea for dignity. And according to Miller's definition that the tragic flaw lies a sense of optimism, an adjective not usually given to tragedies. Arthur Miller feels that they should be considered optimistic in that a tragedy "reinforces" (*Miller, tragedy and the Common man.*). A modern tragedian, Miller says he looks to the Greeks for inspiration, particularly Sophocles. '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 (*Miller, tragedy and the Common man*). Miller writes. "From Orestes to Hamlet, *Media* to *Macbeth*, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in his society." Miller considers the common man 'as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were' (*Miller, tragedy and the Common man*). Again Arthur Miller, the famous playwright said, "each person has a chosen image of self and position. Tragedy results when the characters environment denies the fulfillment of this self-concept. This is a contrast from Aristotle's classic tragic hero because the hero is no longer born into nobility but gains stature in the action of pitting self against cosmos, and the

tragedy becomes, 'the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world ( Miller, *tragedy and the Common man*)

### **The image of tragic heroes in the works of Shakespeare and Miller:**

**Death is two deaths:** According to Aristotle "the tragic hero must die"(Dr.S.Sen, Aristotle's Poetics p 67), therefore the biggest tittle of tragic hero is death. But there are two sorts of death: An inferior death which comes to you, and transcendental or superior that you go for. In Hamlet and Death of Salesman ,Hamlet and Lowman Willy themselves go to death , Hamlet wanted to revenge his father ,and Willy wanted to achieve his dream that he lives luxurious, therefor he sells or kills himself for his sons and his wife. Again according to Aristotle "the tragic hero must elicit both pity and fear from audience"(S.H. Butcher, *The Poetics of Aristotle*. 45-47)

Therefore he must go to death, not death comes to him, so that he could arouse pity from his audience, as Hamlet and Lowman Willy do. Hamlet says last words to his friend, Horatio." Hamlet: O, I die, Horatio; The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit. I cannot live to hear news from England....."(Hamlet Act ii).

Willy's wife, Linda says:" Forgive me, dear, I can't cry, I don't know what it is, but I can't cry....."(: *Death of a Salesman: Act ii*), these words she said on Willy's grave.

### **1-Shakespeare's Hamlet as Tragic Hero:**

**a- Hamlet in *Hamlet*:** Is Hamlet a tragic hero? In many senses, Hamlet is the quintessential tragic hero. Not only does he begin with the noblest enthusiasms to punish his father's murderer, but by the end, his situation is do dire that the only believable final act should be his death. Like the classical tragic hero, Hamlet does not live to see the full result of his actions and more importantly, this is because he owns a tragic flaw.

While there are a number of flaws inborn to his character, it is Hamlet's deep identification with and understanding of the power of words and language that ultimately bring about his necessary tragic ending. Hamlet's deep connection with language and words causes him to base his perceptions of reality on his reading and understanding of words and he allows himself to become stressed with creating meaning. The tragic hero creates by his power words which influence on the audience as we saw how Hamlet does, also he as player has special tone makes his audience are pity with him. Hamlet suggests, eventually, his own words and tone are his end since being a highly verbose and introspective man, this is both one of his greatest gifts as well as his tragic flaw. Here I talk about two aspects, the first is practical aspect on stage this is Hamlet's tone and the second is thinking aspect on text this is Hamlet's words, both make tragic hero. Hence this tragic hero makes by writer who is Shakespeare and the player who he embodies character's tragic hero, they make us pity with tragic hero. Hamlet fits several into several of the defining qualities of a tragic hero in literature, particularly in terms of how he possesses a tragic flaw. The fact that Hamlet's best quality is also his downfall, his tragic flaw, in other words, makes him a major candidate for a tragic hero and in fact, makes him one of the most tragic figures in the works of Shakespeare in general. More specifically, what makes Hamlet even more of a tragic hero is that his actions and tragic flaw is not his fault. He is an introspective character and in a normal situation, this might not be a problem. However, being part of the royal family makes him prone to negative and stressful situations and thus his meeting with words to level in which he is almost crippled is completely tragic, even if it is not because of anything he had overtly done. For Hamlet, the power of language and words are the key to both the driving action of the play as well its outcome as all characters have somehow been affected by poisoned words. In many senses, each character's

sense of reality has been created and shaped because of their relationship to language and words, often to tragic ends and for this reason, it becomes clear that his fascination with language is part of his tragic flaw as a character. Therefore we as readers of this play by Shakespeare is offered some degree of foreshadowing when the ghost of Hamlet's father states, in one of the important quotes from Hamlet that Claudius has poisoned "*the whole ear of Denmark*"(Act ii), with his words. Although we are not aware of it yet, words will drive the action of the play. For example, it is not necessarily Hamlet's actions toward Ophelia that are part of what drives her to suicide, but his words. He, like other men in the play, scolds her like a child, telling her she should enter a nunnery instead of becoming a "*breeder of sinners*"(Act ii), .While he may have simply ignored her or shunned her in a more physical manner, instead he uses the power of words to act as daggers. Unlike many of the other characters in the play, Hamlet understands fully his skill with words and language and he uses this, above all, to achieve his ends. His exchanges with Ophelia are just one example of his use of language to lead toward a desired result. For example, it is not simply his reaction to his mother that drives that their relationship, but his skillful use of words and language. At one point, Hamlet recognizes his power with words and tells the audience, as if recognizing this to be his tragic flaw "*I will speak daggers to her, but use none*"(Act iii) . The idea that words are equal with daggers is a central idea in this text and it is also noticeable how Hamlet's belief in the power of language makes others believe it as well, especially those who are full of words, but who speak only hollow vapid sentences such as Polonius or Claudius, who actually makes the statement while praying that "*my words fly up, my thoughts remain below*" (Act iii).

The idea expressed here is that he is always speaking but is not using language to his benefit, even when it is in supplication to God. The characters in Hamlet by Shakespeare

who are not as adept at weaving reality through language are not as sharp as Hamlet and as the play continues, one notices that the power of words is truly equivalent to that of the dagger, also the tone.

**B-Hamlet's irresolution:** Everyone should be asked himself if he can do Hamlet's role and what he does. Hamlet lived tragic situation between the revenge to his father or make his mother without husband again. Therefore we see through four hundred years ago many of critics discuss Hamlet's irresolution how Hamlet lives this case but they did not give truth answer , I think because they did not test to live Hamlet's problem , hence I call them to test than write their critic . Now I put some images about this character through my reading *Hamlet* as text and Hamlet as human. Tragedy of Hamlet, Shakespeare's most popular and greatest tragedy, displays his genius as a playwright, as literary critics and academic commentators have found an unusual number of themes and literary techniques present in Hamlet. Its main character, Hamlet, possesses a tragic flaw which obstructs his desire for revenge and ultimately brings about his death. This tragic flaw makes him a tragic hero, a character who is destroyed because of a major weakness, as his death at the end could possibly have been avoided were it not for his tragic flaw.

Hamlet's flaw of irresolution, the uncertainty on how to act or proceed, is shown when Hamlet sees a play and the passion the actors had, after Hamlet's third soliloquy, in Hamlet's fourth soliloquy, and in Hamlet's indecisive pursuit in ravening his father's death. First, Hamlet's flaw of irresolution is shown when he sees a play and the passion one particular actor had. A group of players has arrived and Hamlet arranges a personal viewing of *The Murder of Gonzago* with a small portion of his own lines inserted'(Raghukul, *Hamlet*, p.38). Hamlet then observes one portion of the play in which one of the players put on a great display of emotion. Hamlet, besieged by guilt and

self-contempt, remarks in his second soliloquy of Hamlet of the emotion this player showed despite the fact that the player had nothing to be emotional about. Hamlet saw that he himself had all the reason in the world to react with great emotion and sorrow, yet he failed to show any that could compare with the act of the player. Hamlet calls himself a "rogue and peasant slave" and a "dull and muddied-mettled rascal" who, like a "John-a-dreams", can take no action. Hamlet continues his fiery speech by degrading himself and resulting to take some sort of action to revenge his father's death. Next, Hamlet's flaw of irresolution is shown after his third soliloquy, the famed "*To be or not to be*"(Act iii). Hamlet directly identifies his own tragic flaw, remarking of his own inability to act. Hamlet, unsure whether or not the his uncle Claudius was responsible for his father's murder, schemes to have The Murder of Gonzago presented to the royal court, with a few minor changes, so its contents would closely resemble the circumstances behind the murder. Reflecting on his own guilt, he talks of death, referring to it as the undiscovered country, and then continues by riddling his own feelings. He declares "conscience does make cowards of us all" and that the natural ruddy complexion of one intent, or resolute, on an action is "sicklied" over with the "*pale cast of thought*"(Act ii) .This makes an individual second guess his own actions and often times take no action at all, due to his own irresolution. These statements not only applied to what had occurred up to that point but also foreshadowed what was to occur. Next, Hamlet's flaw of irresolution is shown during his fourth soliloquy. Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway, and his army have passed by Hamlet and his escorts. Hamlet sees the action Fortinbras was taking in fighting and then examines Fortinbras's efforts and bravery in an attempt to rekindle his own desire for revenge against Claudius for his father's death. Hamlet remarks how everything around him attempts to "*spur my dull revenge*"(Act ii), yet he takes no action. He notices how he thinks "too precisely on an event" and that he has "cause,

and will, and strength, and means" to get revenge and how the evidence pointing to Claudius as his father's killer is as evident as earth itself. Hamlet finally decides "*my thoughts be bloody'. or be nothing worth*"(Act iii)He has finally decided he must take action against Claudius in some form or fashion. Last, Hamlet's indecisive pursuit in avenging his father's death is shown as evidence of his tragic flaw. Hamlet encounters numerous opportunities to kill Claudius, yet he always comes up with some excuse preventing action. After first hearing of the crime from his father's ghost, Hamlet immediately sets out to take action. Hamlet then began to think that perhaps his father's ghost was conjured by the devil in an attempt to make Hamlet become irrational and kill Claudius, who might happen to be innocent, which would forever damn his soul. Hamlet then schemes to determine Claudius's guilt through the play. ' Claudius views the play and becomes very uncomfortable with the situation to the point of stopping the play and leaving. This confirms Claudius's guilt to Hamlet, and Hamlet again sets out to avenge his father's death'(Raghukul, *Hamlet.*, p.60). Hamlet then catches Claudius in prayer, a rare time he will find Claudius alone. Hamlet, again, begins to think how Claudius will have had his sins forgiven and that he wants to damn Claudius's soul. Hamlet resolves to wait and kill Claudius at another time. Claudius, through all of this, realizes Hamlet knows of his crime and plots to have Hamlet killed by first sending him to England and then having him murdered. Hamlet escapes this ploy and Claudius plots again to have Hamlet killed in a fencing match. At the fencing match,' Hamlet is wounded by a poisoned strike with the foil. Hamlet, in a dying act, kills Claudius by making him drink poison. Hamlet's flaw of irresolution essentially destroyed him, as his failure to act in previous situations led to his own death'(Raghukul, *Hamlet* p.60). Hamlet's irresolution is obvious in his actions after viewing the emotion of the actors, after his third soliloquy, in his fourth soliloquy, and in his

indecisive pursuit of revenge for his father's death. Hamlet was able to avenge his father's death, but his own death due to his irresolution labels him as a tragic hero. The Tragedy of Hamlet masterfully shows how the inability to act, however noble the intentions, can be detrimental to character.

**C-Hamlet as Prince:** Hamlet in *Hamlet* is a Prince not as Lowman Willy in *Death of Salesman*, therefore we can say Hamlet is a Prince which is the title character and protagonist of William Shakespeare tragedy Hamlet. He is the Prince of Denmark, nephew to the usurping Claudius, and son of King Hamlet, the previous King of Denmark. Throughout the play, he struggles with whether, and how, to avenge the murder of his father, and struggles with his own sanity along the way. By the end of the tragedy, Hamlet has caused the deaths of Polonius, Laertes, Claudius, and his two childhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He is also indirectly involved in the deaths of his love Ophelia drowning and of his mother Gertrude poisoned by mistake. Hamlet himself is the final character to die in the play. The play opens with Hamlet deeply depressed over the recent death of his father, King Hamlet, and his uncle Claudius' ascension to the throne and hasty marriage to Hamlet's mother Gertrude. One night, his father's ghost appears to him and tells him that Claudius murdered him in order to usurp the throne, and commands his son to avenge his death. Claudius sends for two of Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to find out what is causing Hamlet so much pain. Claudius and his advisor Polonius convince Ophelia, Polonius' daughter and Hamlet's true love to speak with Hamlet while they secretly listen. Hamlet enters, contemplating suicide, "*To be or not to be*"(Act iii). Ophelia greets him, and offers to return his remembrances, upon which Hamlet questions her honesty and tells her to "*get thee to a nunnery*."(Act ii), actors to perform a play about the murder of a king in front of the royal court, and waits to gauge Claudius'

reaction. When Claudius leaves the audience deeply upset, Hamlet knows that the ghost was telling the truth. He follows Claudius into his chambers in order to kill him, but stops when he sees his uncle praying; he does not want to kill Claudius while he is in a state of grace. A second attempt on Claudius' life ends in Polonius' accidental death. Claudius, now fearing for his life, sends Hamlet to England, accompanied, and closely watched, by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Alone, Claudius discloses that he is actually sending Hamlet to his death. Prior to embarking for England, Hamlet hides Polonius' body, ultimately revealing its location to the King. Meanwhile, her father's death has driven Ophelia insane with grief, and Claudius convinces her brother Laertes that Hamlet is to blame. He proposes a fencing match between the two. Laertes informs the king that he will further poison the tip of his sword so that a mere scratch would mean certain death. Claudius plans to offer Hamlet poisoned wine if that fails. Gertrude enters to report that Ophelia has killed herself.

**d-The Power of Words and Language:** The power of Words and Language make audience more nearby with the tragic hero and his action, hence we see in Hamlet, the power of words helps drive the central action of the plots. While there are different motivations for characters to employ the power of words and language in both Hamlet and Othello, the result is generally the same. First of all, it becomes clear that the words themselves have the power to shape and create a sense of reality.' Without a steady stream of words, both internal and external, much of the tragic action in each play would likely be stunted. In Hamlet, words are weapons and can be like poison in the ear or like daggers. Furthermore, Hamlet's deep connection with language and words causes him to base his perceptions of reality on his interpretation and understanding of words' (Nicole Smith, *poetry No comments Print* p 81). Being an introspective man, this is both one of Hamlet's greatest gifts

as well as Hamlet's defining tragic flaw. Interestingly, despite the wide difference in plot, these two sub-themes also appear in Othello. Without the "poison in the ear" being spread by Iago, the action of the play might never have taken place since it is his language and words that spur Othello into action. Similarly, Othello's understanding of his reality is shifted and reconstructed as a result of words and despite his demands for "ocular proof," the poisonous words of Iago are his downfall. It is interesting that two vastly different plays should offer readers such a distinct parallel and it is worth exploring the ways in which these themes are expressed in either text. One of the central images in Shakespeare's Hamlet is that of the ear being poisoned, both literally and metaphorically. While in the case of Hamlet's murdered father the poison was inserted directly into the ear, the meaning is extended to include the power offered by words and language to manipulate and destroy. In essence, as the play progresses, words are the key to both the driving action of the play as well its outcome as all characters have somehow been affected by poisoned words. In many senses, each character's sense of reality has been created and shaped because of their relationship to language and words, often to tragic ends. The reader is offered some degree of foreshadowing when the ghost of Hamlet's father states that Claudius has poisoned "the whole ear of Denmark" with his words. Although the reader is not aware of it yet, words will drive the action of the play. For instance, it is not necessarily Hamlet's actions toward Ophelia that are part of what drives her to suicide, but his words. He, like other men in the play, scolds her like a child, telling her she should enter a nunnery instead of becoming a "*breeder of sinners*"(Act ii). While he may have simply ignored her or shunned her in a more physical manner, instead he uses the power of words to act as daggers. Unlike many of the other characters in the play, Hamlet understands fully his skill with words and language and he uses this, above all, to achieve his ends. His exchanges with

Ophelia are just one example of his use of language to lead toward a desired result. For example, it is not simply his reaction to his mother that drives that their relationship, but his skillful use of words and language. At one point, Hamlet recognizes his power with words and tells the audience in one of the important quotes from "*Hamlet*" by William Shakespeare, "*I will speak daggers to her, but use none*" (Act ii). The idea that words are equal with daggers is a central idea in this text and it is also noticeable how Hamlet's belief in the power of language makes others believe it as well, especially those who are full of words, but who speak only hollow vapid sentences such as Polonius or Claudius, who actually makes the statement while praying that "*my words fly up, my thoughts remain below*" (Act ii). The idea expressed here is that he is always speaking but is not using language to his benefit, even when it is in supplication.

## **2. Miller's Willy as Tragic Hero:**

**A-Lowman Willy in *Death of Salesman*:** Willy Lowman is indeed a pathetic and tragic hero of *Death of a Salesman*. His problems stem from his own delusions, the American tells the story of everyday people in American society. His environment is changing faster than his beliefs which is why he is in the dilemma that he is in now. His own delusions are a result of his failure to succeed in life. He still believes he is popular, respected and good looking. But at age 63, he is none of these. Nobody liked him that much since very few people came to his funeral. His delusion was that there would be people across the country coming to the funeral. However, in those moments that he begins to realize the truth, his wife Linda while understanding his situation, supports his delusion. She say to him that "*you're the best looking man in the world*" (*Death of Salesman Act ii*). But the truth is that being popular and good looking is not how you would succeed in the world now. It would

be through hard work and perseverance. The American Dream has long turned sour for him. At the beginning of his life, he remembers traveling in a wagon going westward. His parents conquered the new frontier and succeeded. His brother Ben went "into the jungle at 17 and came out rich at age 21". For a while, the American Dream was alive in Willy too. He helped stake out new territory by selling his goods, his son Biff was going to go to university with a scholarship and he had a home with no apartments closing on him. But now, he was forced to work on commission at an old age and was fired later by his godson. His favored son Biff had wandered about the country doing odd jobs for many years, his friend's son Charlie was successful and his home was now surrounded by apartment buildings which blocked out the sunlight. He was not a success in selling, he failed to raise his sons and his beliefs were just delusions. Only through hard work and perseverance would he achieve his goal of success but he decided to go along the lazy route and failed. 'Willy Lowman misunderstood his family and job with profound repercussions'(Willy Lowman as Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." 123HelpMe.com.).He totally misunderstood his occupation by trying to sell himself than the products. He could not hope to succeed because there was virtually nothing to advance on him. People could buy into him because there was nothing to sell in the first place.' Because of this, he eventually lost his job. His family was something he equally misunderstood. His wife and two children did not let him know that they knew the truth about him. They would tell him that his beliefs were wrong and that they knew he was trying to kill himself. They did not always support him. As Biff was leaving the restaurant, he told Happy to take care of his father ' Happy rejected him and he told the two girls he had picked up that Willy was not his father but was "just a guy" (Willy Lowman as Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.123HelpMe.com.)

Willy left the restaurant very humiliated. His son Biff no

longer had the same ideals as Willy or respected him much after his affair with Miss Francis.' He had instilled the idea along with Linda that they had the ability to save him but they didn't. He later dies to escape the repercussions of the problems he has caused himself. 'The pathetic and tragic hero of *Death of Salesman* is Willy Lowman. He had a bright future but later got lost along the way. This is the story of the "Low Man". Many believe in ideals like Willy's, many have had the American Dream fail and many did not see that their family lost their way because of them. It is a tragedy that a man with so much potential lost everything by believing in the wrong things and never realizes his situation'(Willy Lowman as Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." 123HelpMe.com.). Willy Lowman is often thought of as a hero. Of course, he's a particular kind of hero: a tragic hero. The ancient Greeks were the first to write about these doomed souls. Sophocles' *Oedipus* is the most perfect example at least according to Aristotle. But how is slouchy old Willy Lowman in any way similar to the heroes of Greek tragedy? , they share a little thing the Greeks liked to call hamartia. This word is often translated as "tragic flaw" (Willy Lowman as Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." 123HelpMe.com). Just like *Oedipus*, Willy Lowman goes through his life blindly, never realizing the full truth of himself. Willy refuses to admit that he's a failure.' It could say that the idea of hamartia is seen in Willy through his delusional personality. Also like *Oedipus*, and almost all tragic heroes', Willy's hamartia causes his own downfall. In the end, Willy's delusions lead him to take his own life. According to Aristotle,' tragic heroes also have a moment of recognition, or anagnorisis. This is supposed to be a moment where the hero realizes the terrible mistake he's made and usually moans about it a lot'(Dr. S. Sen,Aristotle's *Poetics*, p .22.) .This happens to *Oedipus* when he realizes that he's inadvertently killed his father and slept with his mother. It could argue that Willy has a small realization near the end of the play. He never

says it directly, but at some point probably after Howard fires him he must realize that he's just never going to succeed in business. If he didn't come to this realization, then he wouldn't decide to kill himself so that Biff could use his life insurance money. However, though Willy must make some small realization toward the end of the play, we hesitate to label it as full blown anagnorisis. Willy definitely goes to his death amidst a cloud of delusion. Even after Biff totally lays it out for his dad that all he wants to do is be a cowboy or whatever, Willy refuses to understand the pitiful salesman kills himself, thinking that Biff will use the life insurance money to start a business.' It becomes painfully obvious at the funeral that this is totally not going to happen, showing that Willy went to his death without coming to grips with reality. Yes, it seems that, unlike many classical Greek tragic heroes, Willy doesn't have a major anagnorisis' (Willy Lowman Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." 123HelpMe.com.)

**B-Lowman Willy is an incorrigible dreamer:** As Hamlet lived a psychological aspect which it is his irresolution we now see our tragic hero, Lowman Willy, how he is an incorrigible dreamer. Let us read Lowman Willy, he is a sixty year old salesman living in Brooklyn, Willy Lowman is a gregarious, mercurial man with powerful aspirations to success. However, after thirty-five years working as a traveling salesman throughout New England, Willy Lowman feels defeated by his lack of success and difficult family life .Although he has a dutiful wife, his relationship with his oldest son, Biff, is strained by Biff's continual failures. As a salesman, Willy Lowman focuses on personal details over actual measures of success, believing that it is personality and not high returns that garner success in the business world. Willy dreams and dream .When he was a young salesman, he dreamt:" *someday I will have my own business, and I will never have to leave home any more*"(Act ii). At that time his son Happy said that he

hoped that it would be as big as that of uncle Charley. But Willy's optimism and enthusiasm has superseded Harpy's hope. Willy had confidently asserted: "*Bigger than uncle Charley ! Because Charley is not liked. He is liked, but he is not well-liked.*"(Act ii) He believes "personality" to be the arch-stone of success. His ideals and dreams are constantly being shot at. In fact, Willy is a man who is a failure, is completely broken and limps behind others, trying to keep pace with a world which is getting degenerate and dehumanized every moment. Yet his fanatic adherence to his dreams is admirable and his retreat in his shell of illusions is fantastic .When the scene of the play opens, Willy "*is past sixty years of age*", *but he has nothing to fall back on, either materially or emotionally*"(Act I). A sense of economic and social insecurity gnaws Willy from within. His massive dreams and his modest achievement form a ridiculous contrast. Willy has been a misfit in his society. He is a complete failure in life. He has failed as a salesman and as father too he has been a tremendous failure. He has incurred the displeasure of his boss and been dismissed by him. As a father, he now commands no respect from his sons. Success doesn't come from just luck, popularity, or personality. All throughout the Death of a Salesman, Lowman tells his two sons, Biff and Happy, that the key to success in life is to be "well liked" and that all you need is "a smile and a shoeshine." According to Willy, *if you can become popular and get people to like you, you'll have it made in life*'(Act ii). The other part of Willy's success equation was dumb luck; he thought men just stumbled into success the way his brother apparently came into his diamond fortune in Africa. But this philosophy simply sets Willy and his sons up for failure. Good luck and being well liked will only get you so far in life. The true lynchpin of success is tireless ambition and hard work. Neither Willy nor his sons ever learn this, and they are consequently failures at the game of life. *Don't be superficial like Willy; put you shoulder to the wheel'*. But the saying is "*beautiful people are not always good*

people, but the good people are always beautiful"(IBIN TLAB ,NehjeBlekeh. p 43.)

**C-Lowman Willy as Common man :** Lowman Willy is tragic hero but he is ,in sometime, a common man as we saw in classical tragedy it must be tragic hero is a prince or a king, therefore Willy is also different from his tragic predecessors, because he isn't royalty of any kind . Yet, Willy is just a salesman. He has no real power in the world, and not too many people really care when he dies. Unlike the legendary and powerful Oedipus, Willy is a nobody. 'But why would Arthur Miller try and write a tragedy about a total schmuck? Did he not read Aristotle's book or something? Hardly, we're guessing that Miller knew Aristotle's ideas better'than we do. It turns out that the fact that Willy is an everyday guy is part of the whole point Miller is trying to make' (Willy Lowman as Tragic Hero in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.)"

In Arthur Miller's famous essay, "*Tragedy of the Common Man*," he states, "I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest. sense as kings were."( Miller, *tragedy of the Common*) Miller goes on to say that it's not the fact that past tragic heroes have been royal that makes them resonate with modern audiences. It's that fact that they share the same problems as we do today, the same flaws, fears, and hopes. Some critics have said that true tragedy is impossible when the hero is a common man. They say that when an everyday guy goes down, not as many people suffer as they would if it were a king. , sure, but it has a question: Is the size of a tragedy really limited to the world of the play? Can't he look into the life of a common man and recognize their own flaws? Can't he see those flaws in society around them? Why can't a common man's life have size and meaning? Miller ends his essay by saying, "It is time, I think, that we who are without kings took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead in our time, the

heart and spirit of the average man." (Miller, *tragedy of the Common*). Willy Lowman our hero stands out as the brightest star in the firmament of this luminous gallery. Miller has immortalized Willy as tragic character, as one of the most controversial of modern tragic heroes.' One should not be surprised if in future. Willy wins a coveted place for himself, in the rank of Orestes, Hamlet, Medea, Macbeth, Oedipus etc. (Miller, *tragedy of the Common*). Willy Lowman's character who is a representative of a society, he represents society. His allegorical name of 'Lowman' or 'Low-man' allowed Miller to twist the formula somewhat. He is true to type in that he dreams the American Dream, and subscribes to the desire for money and material possessions in capitalist society. Whether Willy is a 'good' man is debatable; his affair would indicate that he is not, his wife dotes on him, and Biff is crushed by the discovery of the mistress, so much so that he loses all faith in his father, and eventually rejects his way of life.

#### **D-The Power of Words and Language :**

*'That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben*

*. Willy'(Death of Salesman Act i)*

The structure of *Death of a Salesman* works hand in hand in showing Willy Lowman's deterioration. It's highly theatrical and an excellent example of how theatre has to show its story and not tell its story. This is most evident in the technical use of past and present in the play. So much of what determines Willy's downfall is the events of his past. Miller chose to show those events instead of telling us about them. These are more than just flashbacks; the past and present occur side by side on the stage, sometimes colliding. Willy hears the laugh of his mistress as his wife darns stockings.' Willy speaks to his brother Ben in the past as he plays cards with his neighbour Charley in the present. This weaving of text allows the audience to 'see' Willy falling apart, to the other characters he

seems to be having intense conversations with himself. Through the magic of theatre the audience sees exactly who he's talking to' (WEALES, Gerald ed. *Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman: Text and Criticism*. P 78)

As a writer and a lover of using the stage to its greatest potential, this use of simultaneous past and present is wonderful. 'Nobody dust blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy.' Charley '(Act iii).

The above quote is not a typo. Charley speaks this line in the Requiem as the family stands over Willy's grave. The language in *Death of A Salesman* is complex, fascinating and very purposeful. There is a combination of realism and symbolism, strange tense and word choices, bold sweeping images. Sometimes the things the characters say don't quite seem to fit. The first thing to remember is every line is a choice. It's not a mistake that Charley says: 'A Salesman is got to dream, boy,' rather than, 'A Salesman has got to dream, boy' (Act iii)

The language a playwright uses can give many signs to who a character is and how to play that character Miller depended on the following

'Word Choice: There are a couple of strange word choices. Have students define the words and describe why they are important in the play. Knowing that they were purposefully chosen, think on why Miller chose these specific words and not others.

Repetition: Miller intentionally uses repetition. Who repeats lines and why?

Flip Flop: Willy often makes a statement and then states the complete opposite. What does this tell you about his character?

Verbal Images: In such a realistic mental breakdown, there are some beautiful symbolic images. What do they mean? It is to find the one line of dialogue that illuminates each of the main characters. Which line says the most about them? What's

the most important line?:( WEALES, Gerald ed. Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman: Text and Criticism*.p 67)

In groups, analyze Charley's language. What does his language say about his personality? His place in society? And most importantly why does he say the line: 'Nobody dust blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy" (Act iii). Willy gets called "Kid" by his younger boss. Biff considers himself a boy. Charley tells Willy to grow up. In groups discuss the difference between being a man and being a kid. Why does Charley think Willy needs to grow up? Why does Biff think he's a boy? Secondly, try playing the first scene between Charley and Willy with Willy purposefully acting like a teenager. Does it change anything? Illuminate anything? In groups, discuss the names in the play. What, if any, is their significance? .Through the relations among the character can find how each one uses the language and the dialogue for conform the other (WEALES, Gerald ed. *Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman: Text and Criticism*.p. 60)

'Isn't that isn't that remarkable? Biff he likes me! Willy "(Act iii) . As with the characters, the majority of the relationships in the play are based in struggle, they're in a fierce tug of war. Characters often want something they can't get from other characters. And at the base of it all is a fierce love. These characters, whether they say so or not, do love each other. That's what makes the struggle so painful. Willy and Biff, Willy and his father, Willy and Hap, Charley and Bernard. What sons think of their father and what fathers want for their sons is pivotal in the script. In the Lowman family Willy is profoundly affected by his lack of father while Biff becomes overwhelmed with too much father in his life. Happy wants his father's attention so much, he becomes Willy. "Comparatively there is the relationship between Charley and Bernard. Willy is astonished that Charley didn't 'take an interest' in Bernard and he the most successful of the three boys"(WEALES, Gerald ed. Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman: Text and Criticism*. P. 56).

Willy and Linda love each other and are there for each other. Linda is there so much for Willy, she stands behind him even though she suspects his dreams are flawed. Willy despairs that Linda has 'suffered.' But neither Linda nor Willy tell the truth to each other. Linda won't stand up to Willy. Willy has an affair on Linda and tries to hide the money he gets from Charley. The lack of truth with undying love is a toxic mix for the pair. Willy is obsessed with the seemingly instant and seemingly effortless success of his brother Ben. Ben offered Willy a chance to go to Alaska and he has regretted it all his life. Is Willy's memory of Ben real or an illusion? Ben is a fragment of a character, almost ghost-like as he wafts into his scenes. He's the only one who talks to the present Willy, encouraging him to commit suicide. Willy spends the whole play insulting Charley, calling him stupid, thinking he's the better, more successful man. In the end, Charley is the only person Willy can borrow money from when he's desperate and calls Charley his only friend. The world of one's dreams, one's ideas is realized only the world of words. The extent of one's vocabulary, the image used a direct reflection of the expanse of mental horizons and the subtle shades and hues that colour it. Willy's world of word is a very narrow world' (Act ii).

### **Conclusion:**

This study is a comparative study between two tragic heroes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Miller's *Death of Salesman*, therefore I focus on three aspects of Hamlet's and Lowman Willy 's life, which they are psychological, social and Linguistic aspects , which create the tragic hero .But each one has these aspects, he is according to his time and his place. Hence the time-place is important to limit the quality of character through any literary work. Time and place in *Hamlet* are different than *Death of Salesman*. In order to make such tragic heroes, Shakespeare and Miller depended on Aristotle's rules, but each

one from them has time and place is different from other. Arthur Miller say; "I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in the highest sense as kings were' (Miller, tragedy and common man), then common man is tragic hero as king according to his time and place, and how they did live tragic action? and what they are suffering. However, it gets that Hamlet's irresolution which make him delay to achieve his aim and revenge for his father ,also Lowman Willy is an incorrigible dreamer make him delay to achieve his aim and live delightful life, than here man has irresoluteness and man is an incorrigible dreamer. Hamlet as prince make him that he has aspects to achieve his aim and revenge, so Lowman Willy as common man make him that he tries to reach on his aim and has high life as his brother, Ben. Then the aspects are different, but the aim is one, they want to achieve their aims. The power of words and language which have Hamlet make him that he is influence on his enemy and his friends ,on his mother and his uncle, king . Hamlet uses poetical language and complex statement, he has famous speech, '*to be or not to be*'(*Hamlet Act iii*) Hamlet understands fully his skill with words and language and he uses this, to achieve his ends. His exchanges with Ophelia are just one example of his use of language to lead toward a desired result. For example, it is not simple his reaction to his mother that drive that their relationship, but his skillful use language and words .Hamlet recognizes his power with words and tells the audience, as he if recognizing this to be his tragic hero 'I will speak daggers to her, but use none'<sup>189</sup>.Than Hamlet's belief in the power of language makes others believe it as well. While Miller's use of language' has purpose and significance. Even his metaphors are used significantly to enlarge the meaning of the play and not for mere decoration, therefor the audience is pity with the hero through his power language and word. Hence Hamlet and Lowman become tragic heroes, because they fight for self-recognition, for gaining "a rightful position"(*Miller: Tragedy*

*and the Common man*), in their societies; both lose their lives when they come face to face with the verities of the world around them: the former's soul is shed directly at the hands of a brutal uncle, a symbol for a corrupt royal society, while the latter's soul is wasted indirectly at the hands of a brutal, merciless materialist society. Both stand for the tragedy of the common man at large, who seeks to wreak revenge on those who had bereaved him the 'rightful' position in society, or usurped his rights inherent in him. Thus, tragic heroes whether noble characters or common men outline a long list of the miseries of experience, ranging from hard work to social failure, and from political oppression to ingratitude. In this way, Hamlet's and Lowman's central moral dilemmas transcend their periods, making them universal figures, who reflect the tragedy of the common man in general. Hence, death for Hamlet, as a tragic hero, seems to be closely associated with the concept of spirituality, truth, and uncertainty: death may bring the answers to Hamlet's deepest questions about truth in an ambiguous world, a world that indicts Lowman with suffering and pain, driving him forcibly to death; in other words, he fails to find the convincing answers to his dilemma in an unscrupulous world; he fails to square his hopes and dreams with the world he had actually lived. As Lowman fails, like Hamlet, to bear the disparity between his dreams and the life he has lived, he drifts almost entirely towards living within his imagination. It is a kind of escape into their own worlds, looking for their "selfhood", for their immortal soul", and "for tremendously powerful ideals as Miller puts it" (Waleas, *Death of Salesman: Text and Criticism*, p144). To implement these ideals, they pay their souls, raising themselves to the level of great worthy men who end up worth more dead, as Lowman puts it to Charley, '*than alive*' (Act iii). Therefore it gets that Modern criticism's style to the idea of the tragic hero is different from the classical viewpoint: classical criticism puts down certain criteria against which the tragic hero is

measured; for example, he should belong to the ruling class; he should have a flaw in his character to bring about his downfall; and his downfall must arouse pity and fear in the audience etc. According to modern criticism's point of view, including the deconstructive, structuralism or post-structuralize approach, the tragic hero does not necessarily have a flaw in his character, or should not necessarily be one of the ruling class, as he is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were as said Millers in his essay "*Tragedy of common man*".