

Abstract

The focus of the argument concerns the changing perceptions and requirements with regard to the tragic hero. What makes a hero tragic in the framework of modern times, with the values of the modern world, and from which he is removed, or the concept of the tragic hero, is the subject of this dissertation. The tragic hero of Arthur Miller, for example, is defined by social influences and values. These specific influences can be traced in an author's works. The author's family, background and cultural context, as well as the historical and political context (The Great Depression) and political events like the McCarthyism, are also factors that influence the author's works. These specific influences can be traced in an author's works. The author's family, background and cultural context, as well as the historical and political context (The Great Depression) and political events like the McCarthyism, are also factors that influence the author's works.

***The interrelated development
of social values
and the concept of the
tragic dramatic hero,
with reference to the works of
Arthur Miller***

by

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Abstract

The focus of this argument concerns the changing perceptions and requirements with regard to the tragic hero. What makes a hero tragic in the framework of modern times and modern values, and how is the concept of the tragic dramatic hero involved with the values of the society within which he functions and from which he is perceived or judged? These questions are answered with reference to the tragic dramas of Arthur Miller, and in particular, with reference to Death of a Salesman.

Literature, as an expression of man's perception of reality, is bound to its context. According to Marxist precepts, for example, man is formed by social influences and interactions. These specific influences can be traced in an author's works. Arthur Miller's personal life (his family, Jewishness and relationships), as well as the social (The American Dream), economic (The Great Depression) and political (World Wars, McCarthyism) influences of his time, are all represented in his dramas.

Similarly, the critic and audience have their own unique frames of reference, consisting of the various ideologies and circumstances from within which they operate. They are in a sense thus also limited according to their time and society. Since literature is thus bound to the social values of its time, and social values and contexts change through history, the tools/ values whereby a literary work is assessed could also change. In particular, the requirements by which a modern drama can be judged to be tragic or not, could be re-assessed in the light of modern times and modern values.

Arthur Miller's works are examples of literature that is influenced by the context of modern times. In his tragic dramas, most notably Death of a Salesman, he has rejected some of the traditional requirements for tragedy and has replaced them with modern concerns, in order to make them more relevant to a modern society. He has, however, also retained aspects of tragedy that have persisted through history. These essential qualities include seriousness in content (tragedies must question the meaning of life and suffering); the hero should be presented in a manner that manifests his dignity, and lastly, the hero suffers and the audience learns from it.

Miller replaces the poetry of the past, which manifested the dignity of the noble hero, with a poetic voice of the theatre, which manifests the dignity of the common man. The common man, as representative of modern man, is endowed with a particular quality, such as a passionate clinging to a dream, like Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman. The hero also has a faulty view of the world, or a character flaw, which leads to his suffering. His suffering must impact on the audience, whether it be in the form of traditional pity and terror, or as a challenge to the audience to consider the issues treated.

The dissertation suggests that Arthur Miller portrays modern social values in an adapted form, modern tragic drama, while retaining the essential qualities of tragedy.

Key terms: Arthur Miller, tragedy, tragic hero, modern tragedy, drama, contextual framework, Marxism, Death of a Salesman, common man, poetic voice.

Samevatting

Hierdie argument konsentreer op veranderende persepsies en vereistes met betrekking tot die konsep van die tragiese held. Wat maak 'n held tragies binne die verwysingsraamwerk van die moderne tyd en waardes, en hoe is die begrip van die tragiese dramatiese held betrokke by die waardes van die samelewing waarin hy funksioneer en waaruit hy waargeneem en beoordeel word? Hierdie vrae word beantwoord met verwysing na die tragiese dramas van Arthur Miller en in die besonder na Death of a Salesman.

Literatuur, as 'n uitdrukking van die mens se waarneming van die werklikheid, is aan konteks gebonde. Die mens is, soos die Marxisme beweer, deur sosiale invloede en interaksies gevorm. Hierdie spesifieke invloede kan nagespoor word in 'n skrywer se werk. Arthur Miller se persoonlike lewe, gesinslewe, Joodsheid en verhoudinge, sowel as die sosiale (die Amerikaanse Droom), ekonomiese (die Groot Depressie) en politieke (wêreldoorloë, McCarthyisme) invloede van sy tyd, het sy dramas beïnvloed, en is daarin inkorporeer.

Die kritikus en gehoor het ook hul eie, unieke verwysingsraamwerke, wat deur die verskeie ideologië en omstandighede wat hulle aangeraak het, gevorm is. Hulle is dus ook beperk tot hul tyd en samelewing. Omdat literatuur gekoppel is aan die sosiale waardes van die tyd waaruit dit spruit, en sosiale waardes en kontekste verander met die verloop van die geskiedenis, kan die waardes waarvolgens 'n letterkundige werk aangeslaan word, ook verander. In die besonder, sal die vereistes waarvolgens 'n moderne drama as tragies of nie beoordeel word, herskat kan word in die lig van die moderne tyd en moderne waardes.

Arthur Miller se dramas is voorbeelde van literatuur wat beïnvloed is deur die moderne konteks. Dit kan gesien word uit die invloed wat sy opvoeding, sowel as twintigste-eeuse aangeleenthede, op sy dramas gehad het. In sy tragiese dramas, in besonder Death of a Salesman, het Miller party van die tradisionele aspekte van die tragedie verwerp, en hulle met moderne preokkupasies vervang, sodat hulle meer relevant tot 'n moderne samelewing sou wees. Hy het egter ook sekere aspekte van die tragedie wat deur die eeue bly voortbestaan het, behou. Hierdie kerneienskappe sluit die noodwendige erns van die inhoud in ('n tragedie moet die betekenis van die lewe en van lyding bevraagteken); die wyse waarop die held aangebied word en sy waardigheid openbaar, en laastens ook lyding: dit wat die held ondergaan en dit wat die gehoor daaruit leer.

Miller vervang die tradisionele poësie van die klassieke tragedie, wat die waardigheid van die held bevestig het, met die poëtiese stem van die teater, wat die waardigheid van die gewone mens openbaar. Die gewone mens, wat die moderne mens verteenwoordig, het 'n besonderlike eienskap, soos bv, Willy Loman se vasklou aan 'n droom in Death of a Salesman. Die held het ook 'n defektiewe wêreldbeskouing, of 'n karaktergebrek wat tot sy lyding lei. Sy lyding moet die gehoor tref, hetsy in die vorm van medelye of vrees, of as 'n uitdaging aan die gehoor om sekere idees ernstig te bedink en oorweeg. Arthur Miller kry dit dus reg om moderne sosiale waardes in die vorm van tragiese drama te beskrywe terwyl hy die kernkenmerke van tragedie behou.

Kernuitdrukkings: Arthur Miller, tragedie, tragiese held, moderne tragedie, drama, kontekstuele raamwerk, Marxisme, Death of a Salesman, gewone mens, poëtiese stem.

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Introduction

"Life is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel" (Horace Walpole).

Arthur Miller (born 1915) is an eminent American playwright whose modern tragic dramas, especially Death of a Salesman, have been central in debates concerning the intrinsic features of modern drama, particularly tragic drama. Miller insists, for example, that Death of a Salesman is a tragic drama and Willy Loman a tragic hero. Yet some critics, most notably Eric Bentley, have questioned this view, proposing that Willy Loman does not attain tragic dimensions.

From this debate, there arises the need to ascertain how the perceptions and requirements regarding tragic drama have changed throughout history, and what, precisely, makes a hero tragic in the context of modern society and modern values. These changes and requirements are examined in Chapter 1, The theory of tragedy: a historical perspective. One also needs to bear in mind, however, that the "value" of a literary work is determined, to some degree, by the social, economic and political context of the society in which it is written and read.

Contextual studies can be validated, as it is self-evident that literature, to a certain degree at least, is a reflection of its author's ideas and values. These values have, accordingly, been influenced by the author's background, his education, lifestyle, certain challenges he may have experienced and his perceptions of the prevailing value system within his society. Arthur Miller acknowledges this influence in his

writing when he states, "a writer is limited by his time and the nature of his society" (Gomez 1988: 61).¹ Miller implies that his work should not be studied in a conceptual vacuum: the intellectual and social contexts of his work are pertinent. Miller's dramas show evidence of the effect that the First and Second World Wars, the Great Depression, Capitalism, McCarthyism and Marxism have had on him. Personal relationships with his family and wives, as well as his Jewishness and educational experiences, have also profoundly affected his writings, as will be explained in Chapter 2, The influence of American society and Miller's conceptual framework on his dramas.

This recognition of the significance of context reveals a shift from the strict literary principles of New Criticism, which have dominated most twentieth century literary studies up to the 1970s. It does, however, correlate to some degree with the Marxist critical approach, which recognises literature as bound by its historical context. Coyle *et al.* (1991: 709) and Jefferson *et al.* (1983: 8-10) explain that Marxism views the status of all symbolic activity such as language, law, politics, religion, moral codes and art as secondary to economic processes and structures. In other words, social domains are divided into a superstructure, where the foundation or base influences the upper levels. The foundation or base consists of the class into which man is born, with its specific powers and privileges. Economic and social forces influence,

¹ **Referencing:** Referencing in this dissertation is as follows:

The first time an author is quoted or referred to, the surname, date and page numbers are written, for example: (Draper 1980: 12).

Thereafter, only the surname and page numbers are reflected: (Draper: 12).

When an author's name is incorporated into the sentence, only the date and/ or page numbers are in brackets: Draper (1980: 12) asserts that...
or Draper (12) asserts that...

When two or more books are written by the same author, the date is always included in the reference: (Gurr 1980: 12) and (Gurr 1988: 57).

Dramas and books written by Arthur Miller are reflected by a shortening of the full title and the page numbers, for example: (Timebends: 34), (Salesman: 21).

The book referred to as "Weales" is a collection of Miller's original essays, as well as Death of a Salesman and others' commentaries.

and to a large extent form, his conceptual development. This in turn influences man's interaction with the world around him. One way of expressing this interaction is through literature. Literature is thus part of the superstructure and is bound by the social and economic context of the author. To simplify this, Miller's conceptual development is formed by his experience of the world, which, in turn, is expressed in his dramas and other literary works.

The pertinence of context also applies to the critic and his conceptual framework, as Marxist critic Raymond Williams admits. The critic should "be aware of the dependence of the work of art on the period to which it belongs, and of the influence which his own time exerts on the judgements he himself makes" (Draper 1980: 13). Critics have responded to Death of a Salesman with completely opposing interpretations and attitudes. Each critic analyses the drama from his own perspective and experience; since these differ, so do their responses. The fact that Death of a Salesman elicits such debate points to its value as a drama of depth and versatility.

Since society is dynamic, it follows that literature, which is constrained by its context in society and perceptions of literature, would also constantly change. This change would include a modification of the traditional concept of tragedy and the tragic dramatic hero. Social values and the concept of the tragic dramatic hero are thus intrinsically linked. Draper (12) supports this view:

When one takes the view of the whole tragic tradition from Aristotle to the present day, it becomes quite apparent that tragedy does alter its shape and meaning from one century to another with chameleon variability, reinforcing the sense that a single, unchanging definition of tragedy is unattainable.

Draper seems to suggest that there are actually no set prerequisites for a tragic concern with the meaning of life, with suffering and with man's place in the drama, but rather that each era's social contexts determine what that society

understands as tragedy. Frow's explication of Marxism sustains this: Marxism redefines "the contours of its field of study and what goes on inside this field, and [it thinks of] this field in relation to social determinations" (Coyle et al: 780). Developments in society thus result in changes in concepts and, extending from this, in changes in literary perceptions and judgements, such as those concerning the prerequisites for a tragedy.

Miller's dramatic works reflect this change in the concept of tragedy, and these works have thus been subjected to a great deal of critical debate in which critics have found it necessary to re-evaluate accepted measures of evaluation. Miller has, for example, employed modern techniques such as realism and expressionism in Death of a Salesman, while disregarding the more traditional techniques of classical tragedy such as soliloquy and poetry. He has given Willy Loman the social standing of an average, ordinary man, instead of that of a person better than us. He has made Loman suffer, but his suffering does not result in insight into humanity and does not have disastrous effects for everyone else. Yet Loman does represent modern man, and does reflect the modern American's desire and failure to attain the American Dream. Loman's character has developed from American society and, as Ferguson (1978: 83) elucidates, "tragedy cannot take place outside of or detached from the society that has nurtured the character of the tragic hero". As modern American society is very different from Ancient Greek society, so the tragic hero must necessarily be different.

Yet, probably because humanity is fundamentally unchanging within a changing context, one can trace through history basic similarities in all tragedies, such as the concern with the meaning of life, with suffering and with man's place in his

environment and universe. Miller has kept at the core of his tragic dramas the same concerns, but he has adapted other aspects of tragedy to make his dramas relevant to modern man. Three requirements of tragedy have remained inherently unchanged, yet have been outwardly adapted to each society. These are: the dignity and seriousness of the content and in the presentation of the hero, the character of the tragic hero, and the suffering which the hero undergoes, that invites the audience to understand more of life from it. Chapter 3, Basic requirements for tragic heroes: an examination of Miller's heroes in his tragic dramas, looks at how four of Miller's dramas manifest these basic requirements of tragedy. The crux of the debate, exposed in Chapter 4, Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman": a tragic hero or an anti-hero? pertains to whether or not Death of a Salesman meets these requirements in modern society, and whether Willy Loman can be seen as a modern tragic hero, or is to be regarded as an anti-hero. The dissertation concludes with the assertion that Loman, although not a traditional tragic hero, is indeed suitable for a modern tragic hero.

Arthur Miller has, as said, deviated from the expected tragic dramatic form, but this dissertation asserts that his works are no less valid as dramatic expressions of tragedy than older dramas, which have adhered more closely to the expected dramatic form and traditional attributes of the tragic protagonist.

Miller's dramatic tragedies, as with all forms of art, serve the purpose of expressing the writer's view on life and enabling the readers or audience to experience that view. Taking Marxist precepts into account, it can be argued that art as an expression of a person's concept of reality, is affected by the artist's personal experience and frame of reference; artists thus manipulate literary devices for artistic, religious, didactic or

entertainment purposes. Drama is a literary vehicle that allows for a variety of purposes.

The powerful effect drama may have on people was known long before the novel even existed as a literary form. One reason for drama's popularity and forcefulness is that through the enactment of drama on stage, an author can disseminate his sentiments effectively. This intention can be explicit, as was the case in the Middle Ages, when the actors enacted biblical stories for illiterate and uneducated peasants, or it can be subtle. This move to a more subtle and underlying meaning in drama ought, as Miller says, to "bring us closer to ourselves if only [drama] can grow and change with the changing world" (Welland 1985: 13). Other aspects of drama that have correspondingly changed with society's changes in values, such as content, form and purpose, will be discussed later in the context of tragedy.

Although all literature expresses the author's sentiments concerning life and society, some people consider drama by its very nature to be a more complex literary form than poetry or the novel. Carol H. Smith ascribes to this perception:

...drama requires a much more complex relationship between the author and the world of the play than lyric poetry requires. Drama requires the construction of a world, not a response to a world. It requires a certain tolerance of multiple perspectives and a flexibility in the creation of a distinctive 'culture' within the dramatic world... (Brooker 1991: 146).

If drama represents a world, as Smith proposes, rather than responds to a world, then drama should represent or reflect the changes in the world it represents, and thus in society. Modern tragic drama would then represent modern man, the modern world, and contemporary concepts, values and problems. Modern drama would be outwardly very different from dramas of other eras.

Looking back at other eras, we realise that Aristotle, too, preferred tragic drama as a literary form. Greer (1987: 68) writes: "though Aristotle admired poetry, he regarded tragic drama as a higher form of art. In addition to being read or sung, Greek drama was acted out."

Drama is a dynamic literary form that can encompass contextual changes, as it is often deemed to be more versatile than poetry or the novel. Gurr (1980: 22), another critic who regards drama as a preferred literary form, reasons that drama possesses "the narrative properties of prose fiction and the imagistic properties of poetry", thus facilitating the desired concepts or reflections which the author wishes to convey. Poetry and drama "both use language to weave verbal chains which create imagistic pictures" (Gurr 1980: 22), but drama has the added advantage of being enacted on stage, visually reinforcing the words being spoken.

Dramas are considered by some critics to be more mutable or changeable than novels, thus making the dramatic form an excellent vehicle for the reflection of changes in concepts. Dramas and novels both relate stories, alternating between groups of characters and still maintaining a central plot. "They entwine lines of the main plot and the sub-plot in a complex sequence from the beginning to the end, and the different strands create a pattern of parallels and contrasts around the main theme" (Gurr 1980: 22). Drama, however, as mentioned concerning poetry, goes one step further as it re-creates the world on stage.

As life involves different emotions, situations, perceptions and personalities, so the drama consists of many categories, reflecting this complex reality. These categories include, among others: tragedy, comedy, history, romance, satire, farce, melodrama

and tragicomedy. Weales (1977: XV) perceives tragedy as the most controversial form: "some aestheticians and critics have spent the last 2500 years trying and failing to agree on a definition of tragedy.... For many critics, the word 'tragedy' is a value judgement", but before one can make a value judgement or offer any valid comments pertaining to the debates surrounding modern tragedies, a knowledge of the traditional and accepted parameters of tragedy is necessary. From there, one can determine how societal developments have affected these traditional parameters and changed literary concepts. Thus, conclusions can be drawn as to the status of modern dramas within a new canon.

Some dramas, such as Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King, fall into the category of tragicomedy, where the distinctions are difficult to make. Potter (1987: 131) defines tragicomedies: they "often open with a tragic situation in the old style [but] end artificially, with a comic or happy ending in which all the problems [are] neatly solved." Traditionally, however, these two forms, tragedy and comedy have been separate and easily distinguishable. According to the traditional parameters described by Aristotle, tragedy's aim is to "represent men... as better than in actual life", whereas comedy's aim is to represent men as "worse" (Draper: 17). Comedy is a collective activity, where the audience laughs together and feels a group in social harmony. Comedies emphasise humans as social beings. Tragedy, however, is more personal and thus more isolating. It emphasises the individual. Steiner (1963: 247, 249) delineates this conviction:

Comedy is the art of the lesser orders of men. It tends to dramatise those material circumstances and bodily functions, which are banished from the tragic stage. The comic personage does not transcend the flesh; he is engrossed in it... The comedy and prose belong to low life, the grief and the poetry to high.

Traditionally, therefore, the features of comedies and tragedies have been antitheses, although these have sometimes become integrated within the same drama, as in the genre of tragicomedies. Richard Dutton (1986: 14) explains tragicomedy as:

Cutting across the traditional generic boundaries of tragedy and comedy, they aimed for a new style of drama which could include everything from the most arcane divine mysteries to the most mundane of characters.... [It concerns] the most massive and ineffable topics of human existence. ...this could not be achieved within a realistic framework... dramatists therefore cultivated an artificial, quasi-operatic mode... which deliberately distanced the audience, keeping them in a state of bewildered amazement rather than engaged sympathy.

It needs to be noted that tragedy in the dramatic context does not necessarily mean disaster, such as a devastating earthquake. "Meaningless events whose causes we cannot trace, contingencies we cannot fit into any intelligible frame of things, occurrences out of all relation to human conduct, can have no place in art," Dixon (1925: 40) insists. Tragedy as an art, Dixon proposes, dramatically presents a manner of thinking about and viewing the world. The thinking pertains to "certain aspects of human life and experience. Tragedy is preoccupied with the more serious, enigmatic or afflicting circumstances of life" (Dixon: 11). According to Dixon's definition, then, a tragedy concerns faulty reasoning and thinking about the world or about life, which results in an agonising experience (as in Willy Loman's case in Death of a Salesman). Surely, then, as human views, experiences and circumstances differ with time, so tragedy as an art must differ with time.

Dixon (5-9) makes the disputable statement that "in real life there are no tragedies", as he perceives a tragedy as art intended to please, not as a reflection of reality which can be upsetting. This view negates the idea of art and thus tragedy being a reflection or mimeses of life. Anderson (1986: 28), a South African critic, argues this

point in an article published in CRUX magazine. She asserts that "art is a reflection of life and inevitably mirrors the real world". Tragedy, as an art, must therefore, necessarily mirror some aspect of real life.

Germane to Dixon's argument that tragedy cannot exist in real life, Gomez (36) allows for the possibility that it could have existed as an art form in the past, but that "many literary authorities consider tragedy as no longer possible in this day and age. Many are of the belief that the contemporary plays are no longer sharply distinguishable as tragedy or comedy." While in modern theatre one encounters plays which are tragicomedies or where the differences are difficult to discern, there are, however, some dramas which can clearly be categorised as modern tragedies, such as Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman and The Crucible. These tragic dramas do differ from the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, but our society also differs from Ancient Greek society. Furthermore, Aristotle's definition was descriptive rather than prescriptive, and tragedy's definition changed before and has changed since Aristotle, as will be explored in Chapter 1, The theory of tragedy: a historical perspective.

Gomez (35), quoting Gassner, highlights four major periods in dramatic literature: the fifth century BC Athenian (Greek), the Elizabethan, the seventeenth century French and the Modern, commencing with Ibsen and his contemporaries at the end of the 1800s. "The drama of the modern age differs sharply from that of the other three periods," Gassner observes. Downer, quoted by Gomez (35) explains how modern drama differs from the other dramatic periods. Modern drama is

...an art without a country, a vehicle for the expression of the ideas and ideals of an ever narrowing world. The great dramatist, whether he be Ibsen, or Shaw, or Giradoux, is instantly at home in all countries with all audiences.

Thus, a modern drama such as Death of a Salesman is relevant to non-American audiences since the central problems - materialism and alienation - are prevalent in any modern society. Since the social context determines the nature of the tragedy, the question thus arises as to whether the social context is national, Western or global. This depends on the degree of cultural-specific themes and content contained in a drama. Most modern tragic dramas deal with fundamental aspects of human nature, which are relevant to all societies. Such aspects include the meaning of life, family relationships, and man's place in the society and moral structure in which he lives.

Steiner (324) agrees with Gomez's assumption that modern tragedy cannot exist, but he classifies the dilemma of modern tragedy as there not being a suitable public context or society in which tragic drama can exist. In order for a tragic drama to be understood and have its desired effect on the audience, there needs to be a society that believes in a higher being, whether it is a God, or the forces of nature. This higher being must punish man for his mistakes and thus teach mankind a universal lesson. If one denies the existence of a universal order, drama cannot touch man's soul. There must also be a society in which there are people who can achieve tragic dimensions, who can have tragic stature. They should be of higher moral standards, or possess a higher rank in society. One could argue that politicians and rulers of countries could be tragic protagonists, but society needs to believe in a universal order, force or structure as well. Miller, however, replaces an outright belief in God and the moral universal justice, by man's social responsibility. His tragic heroes, generally, need to discover what their responsibilities towards society, family and basic morality are. The quality of their lives depends on the extent to which they realise where they fit in, and for what they are accountable.

Ferguson (85) asserts, "It was an all-consuming dream that any goal was attainable". In the context of these requirements of society and personality, Willy Loman in Miller's Death of a Salesman is not considered to be admirable enough to be a tragic hero. He is merely a common man. Yet Aristotle's prerequisites, although a good framework for tragedy, do not dictate the requirements for tragedy. Steiner relies too heavily of Aristotle's description of tragic drama, and disregards the history of changing definitions of tragedy. Common man as tragic hero is an apt subject for modern tragedy.

The "traditional" universal order or forces of nature, against which the tragic hero must struggle, need not be external according to Ferguson, but could be "internal, within the divided consciousness of the tragic protagonist" (Ferguson: 84). We live in an era where an awareness of psychology is prevalent and is used to explain mind-sets and actions, so this could be relevant in modern tragedies. As to the elevated status of the hero, Ferguson (85) debates that "he need be neither king nor prince to achieve this status. He only need be human... [he must be a] loser to the manner born".

In order for a drama to be tragic, Steiner requires society to believe in a higher order. He explains that tragedy is based on an outdated idea that there is a higher being in nature which can destroy (Steiner: 342). Although he refers to the belief in God or a moral force that punishes man for his mistakes, this belief can, and has, also mutated over time. The prevalent belief in the American Dream, which has virtually achieved the status of a religion, is the social context from which Death of a Salesman springs. "Death of a Salesman dramatises the tragic life and death of the American Dream",

Ferguson (85) asserts. It was an all-consuming dream that any goal was attainable. If the majority of people in the USA at that time believed in the American Dream and in materialism, then a drama portraying the failure of those values would touch the souls of the audience.

Death of a Salesman does touch the souls of the audience. The drama ends on a note of victory, of hope, as the audience can recognise where Willy Loman's blindness to reality causes suffering and death, and they can see how victory could have been accomplished, how Loman could have achieved insight and meaning. The drama forces the audience to relate to Loman, compare their own situations to his, and achieve self-knowledge so that they can avoid making similar mistakes.

The changing perceptions and requirements with regard to the tragic hero are identified throughout history, so that the qualities that make a hero tragic in the framework of modern times and modern interests, can be identified and illuminated. Germane to this is the interrelation between the concept of the tragic hero and the values of the society within which he functions and from which he is perceived and judged. Willy Loman in Miller's Death of a Salesman, will be scrutinised in order to validate the modern concept of a tragic hero and tragic drama.