Chapter 3: Basic requirements for tragic heroes: an examination of Miller's heroes in his tragic dramas

Tragedy: "an attempt to make some positive statement about human life in the face of defeat and death" (Carson: 78).

3.1 Introduction

David Burke, who acted as Reverend Hale in a production of the The Crucible at The National Theatre in June 1990, asserts that Miller's plays are tragedies:

> Miller's plays are tragedies, tragedies in the classic sense of the word, in the way that Shakespeare's plays are tragedies. They are about the big things, they are about life and death, good and evil. But beyond that... there is always an enormous compassion for people, for the characters he's creating... because when you read his plays, or act in his plays, what strikes you is the pity of what happens to good, well-intentioned people, broken on the rack of life. And they are broken, very often, by the consequences of their own actions. In the end, as we all have to, they must take responsibility for what they've done. (Bigsby 1990: 98-99).

This relatively simplistic view of Miller's more tragic dramas, highlights one aspect of tragedy that we tend to forget: the effect of the drama on the audience. A drama

need not fit into the perfect tragic mould for it to have a cathartic effect on the audience and thus possibly be classified as a tragedy, but there are some basic principles or characteristics that most tragic dramas exhibit. The aim of this chapter is not to prove that these four plays are tragedies, but instead to show how they manifest both basic principles of tragedies and the principles of Miller's theory for a new form of tragedy.

Tragedy examines seemingly undeserved suffering and injustice. In doing so, it attempts to absolve religion's claims. Religion is not blamed for the tragedy that occurs, but the tragic outcome is rather attributed to fate and the decision of the gods, as in Greek tragedies, or to a universal justice which punishes man for his errors, as in Christian (Shakespearean) tragedy (Carson: 79).

In both of these traditional types of tragedies, as in modern tragedies, there seem to be three underlying requirements for a work to be tragic, as argued in the first chapter. These include: seriousness and dignity of the content and in the presentation of the heroes (domestic dramas, social dramas, whether prose or poetry is used), the nature and significance of the tragic hero and the suffering which the protagonists undergo, within the context of a basic moral force, which impacts on the audience. In section 1.3.4, a basic definition of tragedy, incorporating the essentials throughout tragic dramatic history was formulated. This definition is as follows:

> Tragedy necessitates a serious theme and content, presented in a dignified manner with a moral or serious tone, written in prose or poetry as long as the language and style manifests the dignity of the hero. The tragic hero should be a representative character, not necessarily of status and virtue, but depicting fundamental aspects of human nature, so that the audience can identify with him and his suffering, and thereby learn from it. His character,

being human, allows for a flaw, or faulty view and judgement of the world, which results in the protagonist's suffering and death. This suffering happens within the context of a greater structure, cosmos, or moral forces, which constitutes the ideology in which man believes, whether it be materialism, Christianity or fate. The hero struggles within, against and to try to make sense of this cosmos, only to be defeated. The defeat seems meaningless, yet allows the audience to question life, forces of life, action, and the meaning of suffering. This might result in catharsis of pity and terror in the audience, or simply in the questioning of one's own humanity.

3.2 General patterns of tragedy and Miller's theory of tragedy

Tragedy emerged in Ancient Greece and interest was re-ignited during the Renaissance period: the Greek idea as to why people suffer, implicates the power of fate and man's blindness to his problems and moral weakness. Man's faults are thus acknowledged, but fate also plays a major role in the suffering. This view reflects the Greeks' attitude to the gods; they were mysterious and powerful and their ways were impenetrable to the people (Carson: 79). Thus, the effect of the protagonist's suffering on the Greek audience, according to Aristotle, was a mingling of fear for one's own fate, terror for the power of the gods and pity for the protagonist. Oedipus Rex is an apt example of such a tragedy. The prophecies made about his life came true, not because of a fault of his character, but simply because that was his destiny, mapped out by fate.

Christian tragedies, such as Shakespeare's tragedies, emphasise human error, rather than fate. Suffering in Christian tragedy is the consequence of human evil,

passion or decisions, not that of fate. As in Greek tragedy, the protagonist must die in order for the chain of being, or order in the universe, to be restored. Yet the catharsis on the audience in Christian tragedy is different to Greek tragedy: there is still pity for the protagonist, but instead of being terrified of the power and mystery of the gods, there is a "kind of reverend dread" (Carson: 79). The suffering of the protagonist is understandable and acceptable because the universe is understandable and morally just. As a result of his onerous ambition, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, Macbeth makes a morally wrong choice, breaking the chain of being and throwing Scotland into turmoil. He has to die in order to make amends for his actions - his death is just and points to a universal moral order.

Modern tragedies again differ. Since modern thought is preoccupied with scientific knowledge and religious scepticism, there is no longer a religious faith to provide assurance of justice in the world, so the twentieth century dramatist finds it difficult to present suffering as meaningful or morally just. Modern drama instead seems to show significance in a person's subjective experience of despair or anger (Carson: 79), such as in Eugene O'Neill's dramas, which examine the psychological suffering experienced by the protagonists. In a drama such as Miller's The Crucible, the protagonist's suffering seems excessive compared to his crime. John Proctor is essentially a good man who is accused of witchcraft by a jealous Abigail. Just prior to Proctor signing the confession of his alleged involvement in witchcraft, he and Elizabeth search their souls, leading to profound suffering:

> ELIZABETH (*upon a heaving sob that always threatens)*: John, it come to naught that I should forgive you, if you'll not forgive yourself. *(Now he turns away a little, in great agony.)* It is not my soul, John, it is yours. *(He stands, as though in physical pain, slowly rising to his feet with a great immortal longing to find his answer. It is difficult to say, and she is on the verge of tears.)* Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does

> it. *(He turns his doubting, searching gaze upon her.)* I have read my heart this three month, John. *(Pause.)* I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery.
>
> PROCTOR *(in great pain)*: Enough, enough- (Crucible: 109-110).

Proctor signs the confession in order to live, but refuses to name anyone else. He then tears up the confession, knowing that he cannot sign his name to a lie - he would rather die.

> DANFORTH *(pointing at the confession in Proctor's hand)*: Is that document a lie? If it is a lie I will not accept it! What say you? I will not deal in lies, Mister! *(PROCTOR is motionless.)* You will give me your honest confession in my hand, or I cannot keep you from the rope. *(PROCTOR does not reply.)* Which way do you go, Mister?
>
> *His breast heaving, his eyes staring, PROCTOR tears the paper and crumples it, and he is weeping in fury, but erect* (Crucible: 115).

It does not seem just that John Proctor has to suffer at the hands of corrupt girls and judges, but he does. Yet the key to the impact of this drama is the seemingly unfair suffering which Proctor experiences and which leads to his moral growth and discovery of his inner goodness. In this there is victory. In the fact that, as Miller defines in the introduction to his Collected Plays, Proctor's death is "an assertion of bravery, and can serve to separate man from the death of animals" (Weales: 167), there is victory.

Miller wrote a series of essays after 1949, in which he formulated his theory of tragedy. This theory reintroduces justice and victory into tragedy because the hero could have chosen another path, which would have led to his avoiding or overcoming tragedy. Justice shows that the hero gets what he deserves and victory in the tragedy results from the knowledge that man is superior to animals, that man's death has meaning and asserts humanity's bravery and passion. Miller sees the most

basic element of tragedy as a quality of the tragic hero, namely the quality of a sense of indignation in the tragic hero. He also values, in Tragedy and the Common Man, the drive of the protagonist to "evaluate himself justly" (Weales: 145), which results in his own remorse and suffering.

Miller says this succinctly in his introduction to the Collected Plays (Weales: 167): "...in a great variety of ways even death, the ultimate negative, can be, and appear to be, an assertion of bravery, and can serve to separate the death of man from the death of animals; and I think it is this distinction which underlies any conception of a victory in death".

Miller also explains in these essays that all tragic heroes are destroyed in trying to find and obtain their position in society. Man is a social being and needs to establish a balance between his social responsibility or accountability and his personal desires. Corrigan (1969: 3) further explains that Miller believed that "if each man faced up to the truth about himself, he could be fulfilled as an individual and still live within the restrictions of society." The tragic heroes of Miller's earlier dramas, Willy Loman, Joe Keller, John Proctor and Eddie Carbone, all face conflicts between their incomprehension of their selves and the structures in society (social, economic, family or community). The connection between the tragic hero and this structure is either broken by the protagonist, or is shown to have never existed. Both result in catastrophe.

The difference between the tragic hero and ordinary man is the hero's desire to "question and attack the scheme of things that degrades him" (Carson: 80). The audience experiences terror because the protagonist challenges the universe/ cosmos/ structure that seems just and stable. The audience fears their concepts of the universe and their selves being uprooted and re-evaluated. At the same time, the destruction of the protagonist suggests that a just moral code exists in the midst of the evil in the hero and his environment.

Thus the conflict in modern tragedy is not between the hero and fate, which cannot be changed, but instead the hero struggles against social forces and personal desires that can be changed and overcome. For, as Miller says, "tragedy must always show how the catastrophe might have been avoided, how good might have been allowed to express itself instead of succumbing to evil" (Carson: 80).

Miller's theory of tragedy differs significantly from traditional classical and Christian theories. Some of these differences can be traced to recent developments, such as Ibsenism, which involves a moral theatre which argues a case as well as enacting a story (Bigsby 1997: 19), as well as the social dramas of the 1930s (focusing on man's social accountability). Yet it also owes something to Miller's own experience and exploration of the dramatic form as he has written and produced both highly successful plays and dismal failures. Carson (90) explains that when Miller compared the reception of his plays in various cities, he "became convinced that the ultimate test of a play's effectiveness was performance in the theatre". In his introduction to the Collected Plays, Miller writes: "a play ought to make sense to

common people... It is their innate conservatism which, I think, is and ought to be the barrier to excess in experiment and exploitation of the bizarre" (Carson: 90).

3.3 Dignity and seriousness of the content and in the presentation of the hero

Throughout history, as has been explained, tragedy has necessitated:

> a serious theme and content, presented in a dignified manner with a moral or serious tone, written in prose or poetry as long as the language and style manifests the dignity of the hero. The tragic hero should be a representative character, not necessarily of status and virtue, but depicting fundamental aspects of human nature, so that the audience can identify with him and his suffering, and thereby learn from it. His character, being human, allows for a flaw, or faulty view and judgement of the world, which results in the protagonist's suffering and death (Chapter 1).

This is a prerequisite of tragedy as tragedy involves a serious way of thinking about and viewing the world (Dixon: 11). There is a sense of misery in tragedy - of misfortune (Potter: 128), because insight is given into the dynamics of life and suffering. Life and its meaning are questioned, so as to evoke a sense of moral responsibility in the audience. This is indeed Miller's aim when writing his tragic dramas. In the introductory essay to A View from the Bridge in 1955, Miller explains the idea of victory in tragedy:

> In Greece, the tragic victory consisted in demonstrating that the polis - the whole people - had discovered some aspect of the Grand Design, which also was the right way to live together... It meant a way to live that would create citizens who were brave in a war, had a sense of responsibility to the polis in peace, and were also developed as individual personalities (Bigsby 1997: 11-12).

Drama as a vehicle for dramatically creating a sense of victory in tragedy - of individual responsibility, thus necessitates a serious content and dignified style of presentation.

3.3.1 Elements of social and domestic drama in Miller's tragedies

The influence of social dramas, from Ibsen to Shaw and the playwrights of the 1930s, are evident in Miller's presentation of man in conflict with a destructive or repressive social environment. The "underlying implications of [social] plays are that society is flawed, that the majority of men are too blind, superstitious or venial to see it, and that what is needed is a radical re-examination of conventional ideas in preparation for a complete overhauling of the system" (Carson: 152). Two examples that illustrate these ideas are All My Sons, when Joe Keller is too blind to see his social responsibility and The Crucible, where John Proctor delays too long in providing evidence that the girls are lying. Yet even in these two plays, the general thrust "does not seem to be outward towards the changing of political systems so much as inward towards the world of private relations and emotions" (Carson: 153). This is where Miller proposes his new type of social drama, a drama that deals with the whole man, in relation to his family and society.

The domestic drama that Miller uses, reveals man in his home environment and his family relationships. Miller finds in the family "a microcosm of those tensions which equally characterise a society in transition" (Bisgby 1997: 24). He tends to give an in depth analysis of the men (often ill-educated fathers with two sons). The father often embodies the past and an authority, which must be challenged. The sons "are an expression of a necessary revolt which nevertheless is tainted with guilt" (Bisgby 1997: 24). Joe Keller in All my Sons is the authority who believes that he is right in denying his culpability, whereas his sons challenge him, by Larry's suicide to make amends for his father's deed, and by Chris's condemnation of his father's socially irresponsible act. As soon as Chris realises Joe's culpability, he says to his father, with burning fury:

> What... do you mean, you did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? What... are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do? (Sons: 68)

Chris condemns and challenges his father's view of his criminal act.

Carson (153) postulates that Miller does not show the problems, moral choices or individuality of women. Women are rather shown in their relationships to men (as wives, mistresses or daughters), rather than as individuals. The moral dilemma is seen from the man's point of view, and women are excluded from this moral choice: they are not real, believable characters: they are either too good (Linda, Catherine) or too bad (Abigail). Although this view holds truth in it, as the tragic protagonists are all men, women such as Elizabeth Proctor in The Crucible and Maggie in After the Fall, are represented as characters in their own rights who have to make a choice. Maggie has the choice of controlling her life or seeing herself as a victim of others - she chooses the latter. Elizabeth faces the choice of either persuading her husband

to lie and live, and be judged by herself, or to allow him to forgive himself, die with a clear conscience and not to judge him. She finally refuses to judge John, which, according to Adler (Bigsby 1997: 98), sets her apart and above other Miller protagonists such as Biff Loman in Death of a Salesman and Chris Keller in All my Sons. These two men judge their fathers and find them wanting – neither of the fathers manages to live up to his sons' expectations.

Man is, for Miller, a social being, who cannot be understood properly unless his society is understood (Carson: 154). Life is a symbiotic relationship between man and his social and intellectual environment. In an interview with Bigsby, Miller explains this concept: "The metaphor I like is that of the fish. The fish is in the water but the water's in the fish. You can't extricate individuals from society and hope to create a rounded picture of them" (Bigsby 1990: 80). Miller sees this society in two lights: as a support, and as a prison and man has a certain social responsibility: selfishness (i.e. materialism or self-indulgence) is contrary to the interests of society. Thus, according to Miller, man is created to be in association with others. Miller also condemns the desire of man not to be accountable for his actions or to be merely thought well of by the neighbours.

Gerald Freedman, of the Roundabout Theatre, New York City and Carson both sense a moral responsibility or religious concern in Miller. Freedman (Bigsby 1990: 104) asserts that in all Miller's plays, he is concerned with the individual's responsibility to both the self and society. Although Miller does not dictate morality, he does make one wrestle with one's conscience and realise that one has to live with the choice of accepting responsibility or not. Chris, in All my Sons observes that

"...you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it..." (Sons: 80). Carson (154) concludes that Miller is a religious writer, rather than a social or domestic writer because "He is not so much concerned with establishing utopias as with saving souls. That is why he is always more interested in the individual than the group." Systems such as capitalism, socialism, McCarthyism or Nazism "provide the fire in which the hero is tested", but it is the hero's response in that fire/ crisis that is Miller's primary interest. Miller's concern with aspects such as conscience, presumption, despair and faith, shows a reversion to the traditional tragedies, which dealt with these topics (Carson: 155).

In his essay On Social Plays, Miller's explains a new type of social drama which could "recapture the Greek breadth of vision" (Carson: 84). Miller feels that classical drama and modern plays mainly differ in their concern with ultimate law. Classical drama was concerned with the discovery of the universal order or law and the right or moral way to live (Carson: 85). Greek drama thus treated both private life and the social context. Man was considered as a whole and man's place in the ultimate order was established. Conversely, Miller feels that modern drama no longer deals with the whole man. Social dramas (e.g. of Ibsen and Shaw) highlight social motives; psychological dramas are often merely an examination of individuality for art's sake. Instead, Miller suggests, a new form of social drama is needed, which will examine man as a whole, combining classical approaches with modern interests in psychology and economics (Carson: 85).

The modern tragic dramatist, thus, must somehow show that there is a sense of social causation, a sense of reason or justification in society, for a man to accept

responsibility for his actions. He must show that a single individual can be considered representative of a whole people, so that in identifying with the hero, the audience may learn something about human nature, the hero's nature and the structure of the universe. The contemporary playwright must, in Carson's words, "portray the kind of tragic figure who would have the power to pass over the boundary of the known social law in order to discover a way of life which would yield excellence." One of Miller's ways to portray this kind of hero (and he has a variety) can be found in his first version in A View from the Bridge. He creates an objective narrator, Alferi, who can see the larger context that is hidden from the hero and who "provides a contemporary point of view on the mythic tale as it unfolds" (Bigsby 1997: 13). Miller wrote about a closed society "in which the conflict between the protagonist and the social law would engage the passions of the whole community" (Carson: 85). When Marco stabs Eddie, it implies that Eddie has violated the laws of kinship by his illicit passion, and must consequently be purged from the community. The natural law of society commands this (Bigsby 1997: 14).

There are four of Miller's dramas which, although they may not fit into the categories of classical (Greek) or Christian tragedies, do contain elements of these tragedies, combined with elements of Miller's theories of a new type of social, domestic tragedy, in which the protagonist's actions reflect on a system in society. These dramas are All my Sons, A View from the Bridge, The Crucible and Death of a Salesman. Elements of these dramas will be examined to see where they overlap with and differ from traditional concepts of tragedies.

3.3.2 Dignity of person

> The tragic hero should be a representative character, not necessarily of status and virtue, but depicting fundamental aspects of human nature, so that the audience can identify with him and his suffering, and thereby learn from it. His character, being human, allows for a flaw, or faulty view and judgement of the world, which results in the protagonist's suffering and death (Chapter 1).

Dignity of person in the protagonist ensures that the drama is a tragedy, not just an example of pathos. In order for an audience to identify with a protagonist, the hero should have a certain degree of decorum or stature. There is no reason why the modern tragic hero cannot embody these qualities. The qualities of the hero will be discussed further in section 4, but as an example of dignity, I quote Carson, who saw Lee Cobb act as Willy Loman in the first performance:

> [He was] a huge, rumpled man with a deep, rich voice [who] endowed the character of Willy with a dignity beyond his station in life. It was Cobb's ability to lift his performance onto the high plane of tragic acting, to create a character who was exhausted without being weak, misguided rather than insane, that contributed so largely to the impact of the New York production (Carson:46).

Although a character may not be one of stature and importance in himself, he can still represent mankind and or the society in which he lives, depending on the relevance of the issues he deals with. For example, Eddie Carbone in A View from the Bridge deals with issues of illicit passion, deception, jealousy and breaking the social law of that society; issues relevant to mankind in general, and thus attains a dramatic dimension or significance beyond his identity as a Sicilian longshoreman.

3.3.3 The language of tragedy

Traditionally, the tragic hero was supposed to be of a higher status or social level than the masses and this was shown by the hero's use of poetry. When Aristotle outlines Greek tragic drama, he does not prescribe that poetry must be used, but rather postulates that speech must be beautiful and have "pleasurable accessories" (Leech: 1). Although poetry would appear to fulfil these requirements more easily than prose and was long associated with tragedy, Miller's prose attains the necessary lyricism and beauty. Steiner's assertion that "prose has no place in [tragedy]" (Steiner: 23), is based on the assumption that prose cannot "raise discourse above common speech" (Steiner: 23), but it can and does. Miller uses a heightened prose (as will be explained shortly), which simultaneously sounds pleasurable and roots the drama in reality - appropriate for a tragic protagonist who is rooted in the reality of a domestic setting.

Being socially conscious, Miller focuses on human and moral issues, rather than the political and ideological. He examines issues such as the impact of the public life on the private. One of the ways in which an individual person is related to society is through the family. Sometimes the family threatens his individuality, and at other times it solidifies individuality and helps a person form an identity (Welland: 12-13). In The Family of Modern Drama, Miller writes that "the language of the family is the language of the private life - prose. The language of society, the language of the public life, is verse" (Welland: 13). Miller writes about private life - domestic dramas.

Although his dramas are written in prose, the dignity of presentation is still there because of a heightened speech that Miller uses - almost poetic. In an interview with Bigsby (Bigsby 1990: 29), Miller justifies his particular use of language: "I also wanted to stretch the realistic theatre anyway; I was very impatient with it. I didn't know how to do that except by the use of language which always seemed to me to be terribly important in the theatre".

Although Miller writes Death of a Salesman in American prose, it has achieved recognition for its poetic beauty. In 1953, Hobson spoke of it as "beautifully and movingly written, eloquent, yet perfectly within the common American idiom" (Welland: 15). Kenneth Tynan, in 1954, said of the play that it was "Miller's triumph in the plain style..." (Welland: 15). Miller's style is to lift the dialogue's register above the level of everyday conversation, while "keeping it firmly grounded in the rhythm of ordinary speech and the idiom of the vernacular" or familiar (Welland: 16). Loman, for example, tells his sons that "...the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today" (Salesman: 84). Miller insists to Bigsby (1990: 55) that: "I was trying to find a poetic voice in the theatre while at the same time making the scenes and the characters believable."

Beautifully poetic, yet simple vocabulary is employed. In After the Fall Quentin says: "How few the days are that hold the mind in place, like a tapestry hung on four or five hooks" (Fall: 50), and Victor in The Price tells his brother: "You can't walk in with one splash and wash out twenty-eight years" (Price: 98). Von Berg in Incident at Vichy (Vichy: 39) says of the Germans that "Their motives are musical, and people are merely sounds they play." Later (Vichy: 50), Lebeau comments that, "You get tired of

believing in the truth. You get tired of seeing things clearly. I always collected my illusions in the morning. I could never paint what I saw, only what I imagined." In A View from the Bridge, Rodolpho explains to Catherine: "If I take in my hands a little bird and she grows and wishes to fly. But I will not let her out of my hands because I love her so much, is that right for me to do?" (View: 337). Lastly, Alfieri explains about law to Eddie, "When the law is wrong, it's because it's unnatural, but in this case it is natural and a river will drown you if you buck it now" (View: 339). In all of these examples, the language is simple yet poetic, grounded in the familiar and not excessive - it rather adds to the interest of the audience and shows how important language is in dramas. (Welland: 16).

Carson (150) criticises what he sees as Miller's attempts to "substitute a poetry of the theatre for poetry in the theatre", as being misguided, but he does, however, acknowledge that Miller has contributed significantly to "an effective stage speech combining the power of formal rhetoric with an impression of colloquial conversation."

In The Crucible Miller uses heightened, figurative speech, such as when Proctor despairingly speaks to Elizabeth, "I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free" (Crucible 51). The setting in Salem's history, however, licences this as it is set in Puritanical Massachusetts in 1692. Wood, who writes the introduction to The Crucible, asserts that the strange dialect, phrases and peculiarities of grammar such as "Goody" as a title, "there be no road" and "I am thirty-three time in court" all serve to create the atmosphere of another time and environment. Since the characters are Puritans whose reading is confined to the Bible, their heightened speech is in tune with biblical metaphor (Crucible: xix-xx).

The British playwright, John Arden, supplements this praise of Miller's use of language in The Crucible:

> It was not just the monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon strength of the words chosen so much as the rhythms that impregnated the speeches. Avoiding mush of sentiment on the one hand and throwaway casualness on the other, he never fell into the trap of rhetorical emphasis over and above the probabilities of an archaic Bible-based culture (Bigsby 1990: 91).

Miller successfully changes contemporary American speech into something powerfully moving. Willy Loman's comments that "The world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress" (Salesman: 31) and that he feels "kind of temporary about [him]self" (Salesman: 40) or Gregory Solomon's expostulations that "She was pure like the morning" (Price: 46) and "The piece of used furniture is nothing but a viewpoint" (Price: 38) are examples of this metamorphosis of the common into the poetic. Carson praises Miller's dialogue that is "based on the slangy, wise-cracking speech of ill-educated or bilingual New York immigrants, mainly Jewish or Italian. Within this seemingly narrow compass or regional idiom the playwright expresses a remarkable range of feeling" (Carson: 151).

Although poetry is not used as such in the plays because Miller aims at maintaining a sense of reality in his dramas, the language used is clearly more powerful and moving than ordinary speech.

3.4 Suffering of the tragic protagonists

Before the qualities of the various protagonists can be ascertained, we need to look at their actions, sufferings and reactions to the sufferings.

In the traditional tragedies (Greek and Christian), the suffering the hero endures is seen to bear some relation to his own erroneous action, so that he must accept some responsibility for it. In order to accept at least partial responsibility for it, the hero develops insight into his situation and the fate or universal cosmos that justifies his suffering (Carson: 60), but he cannot change fate and he cannot be excused from suffering. Miller's own definition incorporates the hero's struggle against social forces, which, unlike fate, can be changed and overcome. This is where Miller reintroduces victory into tragedy. For, as Miller says, "tragedy must always show how the catastrophe might have been avoided, how good might have been allowed to express itself instead of succumbing to evil" (Carson: 80). For Miller, the Aristotelian tragic flaw is the protagonist's "inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity..." (Weales: 144). Most people are thus flawless, as they are passive and "accept their lot without active retaliation" (Weales: 144). The tragic protagonist acts "against the scheme of things that degrades" him (Weales: 144). The individual challenges the stable cosmos. In this there is victory, showing in man a force of passion and bravery, which uplifts his humanity.

Dixon and Steiner's views oppose this interpretation. Dixon (37) insists that tragedy must end in defeat. One cannot imply that a tragic flaw resulting in death can be

victorious, nor can the playwright imply that the world is understandable. Steiner, (8) also postulates that one only has serious drama, not tragedy, where "the conflict can be resolved through technical or social means." Miller's idea of victory in tragedy does not mean that the protagonist lives at the end (then it would not be a tragedy), but that the protagonist has the freedom of choice and has to bear the consequences of that choice. He could have chosen another route or made a different decision, which would not have uplifted his humanity or shown his passion. By fighting against his cosmos, instead of passively accepting it, the protagonist reveals his desire to maintain his dignity.

In Chapter 1, the following idea of suffering of tragic protagonists has been formulated:

> His character, being human, allows for a flaw, or faulty view and judgement of the world, which results in the protagonist's suffering and death. This suffering happens within the context of a greater structure, cosmos, or moral forces, which constitutes the ideology in which man believes, whether it be materialism, Christianity or fate. The hero struggles within, against and to try to make sense of this cosmos, only to be defeated. The defeat seems meaningless, yet allows the audience to question life, forces of life, action, and the meaning of suffering. This might result in catharsis of pity and terror in the audience, or simply in the questioning of one's own humanity.

Using the traditional approach, Death of a Salesman and All my Sons can be read as existential plays which examine the relationship between an individual and his fate or the justice he receives (Carson: 55). Willy Loman's suicide seems just, as he has lied to his sons, committed adultery and followed materialistic dreams: he does not deserve to live happily ever after. Joe Keller's suicide seems right: he has caused others' deaths, as well as his own son's. He does not deserve to be forgiven and to live.

These two plays highlight an interest of Miller's: people's different and diverse reactions in times of crisis. Some people are crushed and give up, while others survive and grow from the experience of suffering. Loman is crushed by his inability to be materialistically successful, while his death is actually unnecessary. Miller had first-hand experience of this diversity in reaction to crises; he saw it during the Great Depression when everyone was faced with similar circumstances. Their fates must thus have been determined by their individual reactions to it, and by their inner qualities, values, perceptions and strengths. The different ways in which John Proctor and Rebecca Nurse react to the accusations of witchcraft against them in The Crucible is just one indication of this. Rebecca flatly refuses to confess to witchcraft, "Why, it is a lie, it is a lie; how may I damn myself? I cannot, I cannot" (Crucible: 112), whereas Proctor at first refuses to confess, then does confess because he feels that he is not as good as Rebecca, therefore cannot be equated with her. He then withdraws his confession, knowing that he will hang.

Miller's theory concerning coping with the Great Depression is underscored in certain characters in his dramas. Miller theorised that during the Great Depression, "the people blamed themselves, not the system, by and large, which is why the country never got radicalised in any way... And it therefore became my job in effect to teach him that he should stop blaming himself so much" (Bigsby 1990: 21). Miller saw that the people who believed in Capitalism (the system) felt guilty for their material failure and gave up the struggle, so survival seemed to lie in a person's capacity to make sense of the univeral law (Carson: 55). Someone who could not understand it or see sense in it, gave up, and, in the case of Willy Loman, committed suicide, took the

easy way out rather than trying to face a new perception of reality. Some people, such as Joe Keller, wilfully blinded themselves to this knowledge and suffered as a result. Keller refuses to feel guilty because he has blinded himself to the knowledge that his responsibilities spread wider than that of the family. "I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet to my head!" Keller vociferates (Sons: 73).

Suffering thus does not necessarily mean joyfully submitting to the order of the universe, but more desiring self-knowledge and being on the path to realising what one's commitments and connections are (Brooks: 4-5). The 'peripeteia' or change of fortune of the protagonist sometimes leads to a discovery or awareness, as well as suffering because of that awareness. We can see this in the case of Proctor, when he realises that he cannot live a lie. In other instances, such as with Willy Loman, there is no true discovery of reality, but a false recognition of his connection and responsibilities, so his misguided suicide to try to improve the lot of his family is based on blindness. Even if he does not come to a point of awareness, his family does, and so does the audience.

The tragic protagonist suffers within a structure: traditionally the universal moral law, but in some cases such as that of Eddie Carbone in A View from the Bridge and Joe Keller in All my Sons, they sin against the social moral law and do not fulfil their social responsibilities. In The Crucible, John Proctor does not sin against the Universal moral structure - this is what he remains true to at the end; he does, however, stand in conflict to the misguided society (social law) of Salem. Finally, Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman shares the values of his society. Since his

society is depraved, his fall is linked to and representative of the nature of that society.

3.4.1 Suffering of Joe Keller in All my Sons

Joe Keller, in All my Sons, does not seem to suffer for his actions at first, as he does not see them as wrong. He does not believe in a universal moral law (as in traditional tragedies) that will punish him for his wrong doing, nor does he believe in his wider social responsibility that extends further than his immediate family. He knowingly sells defective cylinder heads for aeroplanes, but escapes the blame of the death of the twenty-one pilots by making his partner, Steve Deever, seem guilty. He is unaffected by the death of the pilots or the destruction of his partner's career and family support, and returns home and continues with his life, confident that he has sustained the needs of his family.

His oldest son, Chris, returns from the war and works for his father, believing in his father's innocence. Joe Keller's partner is meanwhile serving his prison sentence, abandoned by his children, George and Ann. Ann had been engaged to Larry Keller, who was reported missing during the war, but her family had moved away from the Kellers and the town after the incident which resulted in their father's imprisonment.

Chris and Ann have maintained contact through letters, so Ann comes to visit Chris. George then joins his sister at the Kellers and discovers the truth: he believes that Joe Keller has framed his father and so he rejects Chris as a possible brother-in-law. George then leaves and Chris also finds out the truth. Initially, Keller denies involvement: "I didn't kill anybody!" he states emphatically (Sons: 97). He then tries to justify his actions by saying that he had no choice. His business would have been destroyed, and anyway, he did not think that the cracked cylinders would be installed. He appeals to Chris's pity: "You're a boy, what could I do? ...what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? I never thought they'd install them" (Sons: 67). At this stage, however, Joe Keller still refuses to acknowledge that he did something wrong. When his wife suggests that he apologise to Chris and say that he's willing to go to prison, Keller is amazed and tells her, "I don't know what you mean! You wanted money, so I made money. What must I be forgiven? You wanted money, didn't you?" (Sons: 72).

Chris's mother, Kate Keller, discovers that Larry wrote a letter to Ann in which he said that he was going to commit suicide because of his father's arrest. This makes Joe realise that Larry died because of Joe's action. In a moment of insight, Joe realises that not only was Larry his son, but to Larry, "they were all [his] sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were". (Sons: 79). Joe says he will own up and turn himself in, but goes upstairs and shoots himself as he cannot face his guilt and shame (Bigsby 1997: 51). He realises that there is something bigger than his family.

This play embodies a principle that Ibsen first expressed. He managed to adapt Greek tragic drama to realist drama in "the play of ripe circumstance" (Carson: 40).

This is where events which cover a long period of time, or principles upon which a life is based, are put into perspective and shown to be wrong or to lead to tragedy. Since Kate and Joe have built their lives on the principle of capitalism, where "you don't love a man, you eat him" (Sons: 77), they believe that Joe's deception was not wrong because it was motivated by love for their children. Centola explains:

> He denies his relation to society so that he can excuse unethical business practises that keep his manufacturing company fiscally sound and his family financially secure. He convinces himself that his sole responsibility is to be successful so he can support his wife and children (Bigsby 1997: 53).

This principle is shown to be faulty when it becomes clear that their younger son's (Larry's) death results from Joe's action, and when it is compared to the belief in justice that George and Ann uphold. In this world, everyone gets what he deserves. Yet, within the structure of social relationships, where Joe Keller does not have a sense of social responsibility, there are also characters (Chris and Larry) who do have an unselfish sense of social responsibility, whose lives are marked by love and co-operation (Carson: 41). Because they have discovered their place in the structure, they are fulfilled. (Centola (Bigsby 1997: 59) sees Larry in a different light, however; he views Larry's death as an attempt to escape from the humiliation which he would experience in the community).

At first, Keller does not gain insight into his actions, nor feels ashamed for what he has done. Keller continually excuses himself when Chris confronts him with his action. After saying that he had no choice, as he had to keep his business going for his sons, Keller concludes that everyone else was working by the same moral standards as he. He explains: "When they worked for nothin', I'll work for nothin'. ...What's clean? Half the ...country gotta go if I gotta go!" (Sons: 78). It is only when Keller realises that his son has died because of his deed, and the tragedy thus

touches him directly, that he expresses remorse and sympathises with others and "recognises his connection with the rest of humanity" (Carson: 42). Unfortunately, Joe kills himself at the end because he cannot face trial and imprisonment. "His suicide is partly an act of penance for his previous deeds, but is also the act of a man who cannot live with himself" (Carson: 43). He realises that his area of responsibility is not limited to his father-son relationship, or just to his immediate family, but that it extends to a universe of people (Carson: 43). As indicated by the title, Keller realises that the boys who were killed were all his sons (Sons: 79).

Gregory Hersov from the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester identifies with the issues in All my Sons: it is a general human characteristic to make decisions which are harmful to others, for the sake of our own interests of self-esteem, love for our family and business. When Joe Keller finds out the awful truth of his actions, his whole family and neighbourhood are also brought face to face with this trouble, destroying their ideas about their world and themselves. They realise their connection with everything, their place in the universe (Bigsby 1990: 52).

All my Sons explores choices Joe Keller has to make between his own needs and desires, and those of others. Instead of acknowledging his complicity in the crime, he lies about it and denies his involvement in order to "preserve his false image of himself and maintain the illusion that he has regained his rightful place in society". He cannot face the negative impulses in himself (Bigsby 1997: 52). He portrays himself as, and tries to convince Chris that he is a victim of forces beyond his control, who made the best possible choice available at the time. He clarifies his reasons: "I'm in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you're out of

business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business... they knock you out in five minutes" (Sons: 67). He then tries to rationalise the crime, explaining that he hoped the parts would perform satisfactorily. Finally, he blames his decision on the prevailing code of ethics of American businesses at that time. Unfortunately, Keller's denial just aggravates the family crisis and intensifies his alienation and anguish (Bigsby 1997: 54).

3.4.2 Suffering of Eddie Carbone in A View from the Bridge

Eddie Carbone, who is a long-shoreman in the Red Hook district of Brooklyn, and his wife, Beatrice, have brought up their niece, Catherine, since her parents' death when she was very young. When the play opens, Catherine is seventeen and Eddie feels far more than fatherly affection for her, although neither he nor Catherine seems aware of it. When Catherine desires to marry, Eddie becomes extremely jealous.

As a social play, the action occurs within the strict code of loyalty of the Sicilian-American community, and deals with Eddie's infraction of that code: Eddie betrays Rodolpho and Marco, Beatrice's Italian relatives who have been smuggled into the United States. Eddie and Beatrice provide for them, but Rodolpho and Catherine fall in love, which arouses the jealousy of Eddie. Eddie cannot admit to himself the true nature of his feelings for Catherine, so he convinces himself that Rodolpho is

homosexual and only wants Catherine so that he can obtain American citizenship. Eddie seeks legal advice from the district lawyer, Alfieri, to try to stop Rodolpho and Catherine. Alfieri realises the real reason that Eddie is so fanatical, but cannot make him see it. He advises Eddie that "the child has to grow up and go away, and the man has to learn to forget" (View: 332). He also reminds Eddie of the community's strict code against informers, so warns him not to betray Rodolpho to the immigration authorities.

When Eddie returns home early one day to find Rodolpho and Catherine in the bedroom, he orders Rodolpho to leave whereupon Catherine starts to go with him. Eddie grasps her arm and kisses her on the mouth and will not let her go.

> EDDIE: Pack it up. Go ahead. Get your stuff and get outa here. (*Catherine instantly turns and walks towards the bedroom, and Eddie grabs her arm*). Where you goin'?
>
> CATHERINE: (*Trembling with fright*) I think I have to get out of here, Eddie.
>
> ...
>
> EDDIE: You aint goin' nowheres.
>
> CATHERINE: Eddie, I'm not gonna be a baby any more! You -
>
> (*He reaches out suddenly, draws her to him, and as she strives to free herself he kisses her on the mouth.*)
>
> RODOLPHO: Don't! (*He pulls on Eddie's arm*). Stop that! Have respect for her! (View: 338).

In Eddie's anger at the forthcoming marriage between Catherine and Rodolpho, he seeks Alfieri's help; Alfieri merely tells him to allow the marriage to go ahead and to bless her. He says that "Somebody has to come for her Eddie, sooner or later" (View: 339). Instead, Eddie plunges in and phones the immigration officials, who come and arrest Marco and Rodolpho, as well as two other immigrants.

In front of all of the neighbours, Marco spits in Eddie's face and accuses him of betraying them. Marco finally returns for vengeance, but Eddie refuses to run; instead he tries again to separate Rodolpho and Catherine despite the fact that they are about to be married. He refuses to make amends with Rodolpho, instead shouting that he wants his name. "I want my name... Marco's got my name..." (View: 345). When Marco finally arrives, Eddie accuses him and Rodolpho of stealing Catherine from him and making his name "like a dirty rag". Eddie pulls a knife, but Marco turns it on him, and Eddie is fatally wounded. As he dies, he says to Beatrice, "My B.!" (View: 346), showing that he still loves his wife.

Carson (84) comments that this first version of the play is similar to a Euripidean tragedy of passion, "in which the protagonist is overcome by an irresistible and self-destructive madness". The final speech implies that this kind of passion is primitive and that humans should move towards more rational behaviour, but this implication is unclear and Eddie does not seem to exhibit the qualities of the tragic protagonist as Miller defined them in his essays. Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times criticises Eddie in this first version of the play: "far from being a 'hero' Eddie seemed mean and vicious, and got just about what he deserved" (Carson: 87).

In the revised version, Miller focuses on the relationship between Eddie and Marco, instead of on Eddie's passion for Catherine and it is Marco's insult, not Rodolpho's rivalry, which preoccupies Eddie. When Beatrice tries to confront Eddie with his love for Catherine, Eddie turns away; but he then dies in the arms of Beatrice, suggesting that he has finally accepted something of his unusual passion (Carson: 88).

Also in the revised version, Alfieri's final speech discusses Eddie's unique qualities, rather than the primitive nature of man. He says of Eddie that "he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients" (View: 346). "Alfieri is contrasting the sensible people who settle for half and the potentially tragic individuals who cannot let well enough alone. [S]uch individuals are driven to act when others would retire and in so acting, they cause the scheme of things to act with retributive violence against them" (Carson: 88).

If we are to consider this drama to be tragic, then how "can Eddie's actions be interpreted as a challenge of the 'stable cosmos' and how do they lead to the discovery of new understanding or a moral law? What 'holy truth' has been pursued by this protagonist or revealed by his death? Superficially it would seem that the evil in the play is not in the environment, but in Eddie, and in this respect the play is fairly traditional" (Carson: 89).

By Miller's revising the play, Eddie is made into a character who is more sympathetic to the audience, making it possible for the audience to mourn a man who has a certain dignity, even though he is guilty of serious offence (Carson: 90). Throughout the play, Eddie has a choice between accepting Catherine and Rodolpho's love, and continuing to fire his illicit passion for her. He repeatedly makes the wrong choice in pursuing his inappropriate passion for his niece. This series of choices leads to the betrayal of the smuggled relatives, and finally the rejection by his society for breaking their trust. For all his wrong choices, there is victory in the knowledge that Eddie

fights passionately for what he desires, although it is illicit. He doesn't just accept life, but lives it intensely and dies passionately. There is also victory in the suggestion that Eddie dies having made amends with his wife - it is Beatrice whom he addresses just before he dies. This play, like All my Sons, serves to warn the audience that decisions must be made with the knowledge that one has a responsibility towards one's society, not just towards one's own desires. It is the social law and structure that one needs to obey.

3.4.3 Suffering of John Proctor in The Crucible

Basic themes are explored in The Crucible which are still relevant to our modern world. Gregory Hersov compares the Salem persecution, scapegoating, hysteria and killing, "society [devouring] itself in front of our eyes", to modern examples of exploitation, racism and bigotry, through which societies destroy themselves. "We haven't lost our need for witches; they just have different names" (Bigsby 1990: 52), such as McCarthyism.

In a society that becomes irrational, John Proctor undergoes suffering. The nature of this suffering reduces him to his purified, essential self. Carson (60) puts this eloquently: it strips "the central character of layers of protective covering until in the end [Proctor] stands naked - totally exposed," or as Adler elucidates, "the trial will be

the crucible that burns Proctor down to his essential elements" (Bigsby 1997: 95). The dramatic pattern differs significantly from the conventional design of Greek or Christian tragedy. In traditional tragedy, the universal law applies and the protagonist fails in terms of this law. In The Crucible, Proctor finds and upholds his place in the universal moral law; it is the society that is corrupt and fails the law.

Proctor's suffering ends in triumph rather than defeat; this expresses Miller's desire to reintroduce victory into tragedy. The conventional tragic hero is a deluded, blinded or obsessed individual in an ordered universe, Proctor is a just man in a universe which seems to have gone mad (Carson: 60). Here there is a crucial difference between Proctor, and Eddie Carbone and Willy Loman. Eddie and Willy are the conventional deluded individuals in an ordered universe.

Miller's concept of a family being a microcosm of society is broadened in The Crucible: Salem is seen as a microcosm of human society. The girls' accusations are merely a catalyst to a problem in the community, a problem that seems to be inherent in mankind. Miller's interest appears to be in what could make an innocent person confess to a sin that has not been committed (Carson: 65-66). Miller's conclusion seems to be 'terror' and 'guilt', which he develops through focusing on the relationship of Abigail, John Proctor and his wife, Elizabeth Proctor. He examines the nature of this guilt in Proctor, the effect it has on him, and questions what right a society or community has to judge other members of that community.

The play opens with the adults in Salem trying to ascertain the cause of the frightened, hysterical reactions of five girls, when Reverend Parris discovers that they had participated in a seance and a dance in the woods. Mercy Lewis was dancing with Mary Warren and Betty Parris watching; Ruth Putnam had been sent by her mother to commune with the dead, and Abigail Williams had tried to ensure the death of John Proctor's wife.

The responses of the townspeople are standard to human nature: the sinner or victim tries to place the blame on someone else, or at least on something outside her/ himself (Carson: 68). Ann Putnam blames witchcraft for her children's death, Parris blames the devil because he is unpopular, Abigail blames Tituba for Abigail's drinking the blood (which was a charm against Elizabeth), and Tituba blames the Devil for her involvement in the seance and dance. At first, Tituba is terrified by threats of punishment, but when she is offered forgiveness and security if she confesses, she does. This becomes the standard procedure in dealing with the other "victims".

John Proctor's relationships with others are the central force of the drama, the most damaging being his relationship with Abigail (Carson: 67). The audience never knows the extent of this relationship, but at the beginning of the drama, Proctor shows no embarrassment on his part, merely openness and friendliness towards Abigail, yet we are later told that he feels that he went against what he sees as decent conduct. Proctor confesses, "...I thought of her softly. ...I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat" (Crucible: 89). Proctor is a complex hero: he seems to have two sides to his nature, a radical side is revealed when he resents Parris' calling in Hale without

consulting the wardens, and when he opposes the preacher's fire and brimstone preaching.

Hale and the Salem court have passed their first death sentence by the beginning of Act 2, and Proctor has told Elizabeth that he has evidence which would discredit the girls as witnesses, yet he delays in telling the court until it is too late and he is discredited. At this stage, he lies to Elizabeth about Abigail, seeming reluctant to expose her and he hypocritically praises Elizabeth for a stew. He is suffering - "these are the actions of a man who is rationalising in order to avoid facing himself...[he] is happier with external conflict than he is with inner strife" (Carson: 69). Proctor also projects his faults (and thus the blame) on others, when he opposes Parris, browbeats Mary Warren, threatens the court clerk and tears up the Governor's warrant. (Carson: 70).

John Proctor lapses into a hatred of himself: he tries to force Mary Warren to tell the court that the evidence against Elizabeth is fraudulent, but she responds by telling him that Abigail will charge him with lechery. He realises then that his hypocrisy and pretence must be exposed, and hates himself for his faults.

When Proctor tries to overthrow the court, he cannot, as each official, besides Hale, has a personal stake in its continuation. Danforth believes that Proctor is trying to ruin the reputation of the Deputy Governor, his prejudices blinding him, so that by the time Proctor reveals and accuses Abigail of lechery, Danforth is already against him. Elizabeth's lying to protect Proctor is accepted as proof that Proctor is a deceiver.

His public revelation of his lechery does, however, mean that any pretence is removed - burnt on the crucible. Finally, "enmeshed in a madness he could not overthrow" (Carson: 71), Proctor responds with anger, then with insight:

> I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be a fraud - God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together! ...You are pulling heaven down and raising a whore!" (Crucible: 96).

This quotation shows that Proctor sees himself as partly responsible for the evil he has tried to condemn because he was reluctant at first to expose the lies of the girls and thus hurt his name. Adler probes Proctor's moral integrity:

> [Proctor] sees a larger social role and responsibility, arguing that to fail to bring the community out of ignorance, that is, out of its self-imposed condition of blindness to what is ripping it apart, would be the greatest sin and a failure worthy of damnation (Bigsby 1997: 97).

In the final act, Proctor accepts his guilt. He falls to a state of utter self-loathing and has neither self-respect nor dignity. His decision to confess is because he feels too unworthy to be placed in the same category as Rebecca Nurse, who is innocent and also charged with witchcraft, but he does not want to confess to the wrong sins. Elizabeth knows that Proctor must first forgive himself before her forgiveness, which he asks for, can mean anything to him.

Finally, Proctor makes a stand to oppose the court when he refuses to name confederates or have his confession publicised. He cannot blacken others' good names by his confession being publicised and taken as evidence that he claims others to be in Satan's power. Even though the "lie" would save his life, it would ruin the good name of himself and his children (Bigsby 1997: 98). Proctor thus gains

insight into his own character, that he is not as evil as he has thought, when he realises that he cannot publish a lie about himself. Although he is not as good a man as he hoped, he realises that he is not completely evil. Elizabeth's statement at the end that "He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him" (Crucible: 116) shows that he has found the true core of his nature that has been hidden by self-loathing (Carson: 74).

Proctor's triumph over himself and his belief in himself, is the victory in the tragedy. It is not up to his wife, nor society to judge him; only he can do that. He is judged by his own conscience (Carson: 75). His choice is between spiritual death – calling true what he knows to be half true - and being true to his conscience. "Even the law must, in fact, be violated, when it comes into conflict with the dictates of a rightly formed conscience" (Bigsby 1997: 98). Tom Wilkinson, who played John Proctor in the June 1990 production at The National Theatre, discusses Proctor's sense of morality:

> ...John Proctor has a sense of morality which sees the betrayal of his wife as being amongst the lesser crimes... if he hadn't been placed in the crucible which will reduce him to seeing the world in terms of this morality, he would have been able to reconcile this sense of sexual betrayal to an overall moral structure... Proctor is just a man, a man more good than bad, who one day betrays his wife with Abigail Williams... The moment he sees his own name written on a piece of paper... he comes face to face with John Proctor reduced to his quintessence; the crucible has burned off the flabby bits of John Proctor and he's left with his own irreducible moral self, the person he is. And he knows then that life wouldn't be worth living if he gave in and signed his name to save himself... He's not defending an abstract principle. He's defending an idea of himself... [he] is finally confronted with who he is (Bigsby 1990: 95-96).

Proctor saves his name, although Eddie Carbone cannot. A man's name for Miller "assumes a talismanic power... an outward sign of inner integrity" (Bigsby 1997: 98). And so Proctor dies a victorious physical death, having accepted his humanity, his

responsibility, and his core being. Proctor's death thus stands in stark contrast to the misguided suicide of Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman.

3.4.4 Suffering of Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman

Death of a Salesman will be dealt with only briefly in this chapter as a detailed analysis of this drama as Tragedy comprises the next chapter. In the last 24 hours of his life, Willy Loman recalls events and episodes from his youth and his earliest memories of his father, to the summer Biff failed school. It is written from Willy's point of view and encompasses three generations: Willy's father's life - a memory in Willy's imagination, because his father left when Willy was a small boy, Willy's own life and that of his two sons. Willy's desire to give strong, although misguided guidance and advice to his sons results from his own lack of it, since "Dad left when I was such a baby... I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel - kind of temporary about myself" (Salesman: 40).

Willy is absorbed into the American system of materialistic values, where he measures his success by how much money he makes and how many possessions he has. Willy is determined that Biff be a material success, but Biff works with his hands and wants a different kind of success. After Willy has returned home on the Sunday evening, his memory is triggered by events that occur. He remembers the

time when Biff was younger and full of promise and Willy exaggerated his own accomplishments to his sons. He talks about his inadequacy and inability to earn as much money as he would like to - and here he remembers his mistress, whom he seems to have treated better than his own wife, Linda. He buys his mistress stockings, yet finds his own wife mending hers! Willy Loman chose his job under the influence of David Singleman, an old, successful and well-liked salesman in New England. Willy wanted to be like him: materialistically wealthy and well-liked by salesmen and buyers, but, in fact, such a possibility does not exist and Willy fails to realise this. He is not suited to the ruthless nature of competitive selling, nor is he aware of the double standards he sets for his sons: he tries to teach them that being well-liked will mean success, yet encourages competitive and unlawful behaviour (Carson: 47-52). In contrast to what he teaches his sons, Willy is not a material success, nor is he competitive.

"It is this overwhelming need to have his sons succeed that is the underlying drive of his life and the cause of his tragic agony," Carson (53) postulates. Willy sees his father as a "prince" when he understands his father's love for them, but Biff, having been disillusioned by his father when he was fifteen and having discovered his father with a mistress, sees Willy as a fake or "phoney", yet still tries to please him. It is only near the end that he realises that he is trying to become what he does not want to be. His father has had the wrong dreams, and so has he.

The destructive nature of dreams - the wrong dreams - comprises the core of this drama (Carson: 55). Willy Loman, his sons and his wife, all to a certain extent, disguise or ignore the true facts: they constantly deceive in order to conceal the truth

from themselves. Biff eventually becomes aware of following the wrong dreams, and when he confronts his father, Willy Loman cannot face the truth: he prefers to sacrifice his life rather than his illusion. Carson (56) contends that the ending is ironic in that "Miller intends the audience to see that Willy is deluded and that a way out exists." As Willy says to Biff, the door of his life was wide open if he had had the courage to go through it.

The "tragedy" of Loman's suffering and death is that it is unnecessary. He dies rather than accept the truth that he fears will cause his life to become meaningless. He believes himself to be no more than a salesman (hence the title) and since he's a failure as a salesman, his life is a failure. His value as a human is negated as the society in which he lives affords it no value (Bigsby 1997: 4). Willy Loman's death is the symptom of a depraved society that has the wrong values, and the victory in his tragedy is that, had he been willing to face the truth about himself, the truth that he has value as a person, not as a salesman, he could have lived. He has a choice, as does the audience.

3.5 Qualities of the tragic protagonists

> The tragic hero should be a representative character, not necessarily of status and virtue, but depicting fundamental aspects of human nature, so that the audience can identify with him and his suffering, and thereby learn from it. His character, being human, allows for a flaw, or faulty view and judgement of the world, which results in the protagonist's suffering and death (Chapter 1).

The tragic protagonist is supposed to be representative of mankind, so that the audience can identify with the protagonist's suffering, and learn from it. Aristotle's criteria included the hero having a good reputation and being prosperous, having something to lose (eg: rank or prosperity), and embodying values that society sees as important. He elucidates on the proper tragic hero as being

> ...the man who occupies the mean between saintliness and depravity. He is not extraordinary in virtue and righteousness, and yet does not fall into bad fortune because of evil and wickedness, but because of some error of the kind found in men of high reputation and good fortune (Gilbert 1962: 86).

Miller proposes in his Introduction to Collected Plays that even a common man, with no rank or status, may have a certain dignity and be representative of mankind if he deals with questions and issues such as "the survival of the race, the relationships of man to God - the questions, in short, whose answers define humanity and the right way to live so that the world is a home..." (Weales: 165). The hero should not necessarily represent a particular society, but rather represent fundamental aspects of human nature within that society. Some of the issues that Loman and Death of a Salesman deal with, include a family's battle to pay bills, unemployment, a child's quest, felt but unexpressed love, guilt and shame, self-reliance, loss, spite and wayward children. These issues enable any audience, whether French, Japanese or English, to relate to the characters, as they see themselves, their parents or their children in the play (Bigsby 1997: 62).

Miller's idea of a hero is thus based more on the kind of questions raised by the protagonist than on whether or not he is a prince. Not all of Miller's heroes can be said to be representative of mankind, or to encompass the qualities which people admire and with which they can identify. The most hailed and controversial of all of

Miller's heroes is Willy Loman. Carson declares that when Death of a Salesman was first performed, "Willy Loman was recognised as a kind of American Everyman - a universal symbol made real by hundreds of minutely observed details of speech, manner and psychology" (Carson: 44-45). People could identify with him, identify with his suffering and identify with his wrong dreams. "It is Miller's most successful attempt at creating individual characters with universal significance," maintains Carson (44).

As has been suggested, a tragic protagonist needs not have a higher status, or be a better person than the rest of humanity. Rather, he must have the qualities with which people identify and recognise in themselves. He must, too, have some kind of eminence or special virtue, according to Leech (37-38), which makes him notable. Miller's tragic protagonists do embody something admirable, even if misguided, whether it be a deluded hope in his sons' material success (Willy Loman), an excessive love for his family which blinds him to social responsibilities (Joe Keller), a desire to expose society's wrongs mixed with a fear to expose one's own wrongs (John Proctor), or a strong, even though mistaken passion which causes a man to go against his community's rules (Eddie Carbone). These protagonists embody a degree of strength in beliefs and desires, which is admirable. They feel strongly about something and suffer for it.

Robert Davies probes the nature of tragedy: suffering is relative to the sufferer's ability to handle it:

> I have become convinced that Arthur Miller is the true successor to Eugene O'Neill, and in my judgement superior to O'Neill in his perception of the tragic

> downfall of people who, through the malignity of society or their own weakness, or a combination of the two, have become psychological cripples. They are not great people, but suffering is relative; their pain is as much as they can bear, and does tragedy demand more? Arthur Miller's concept of tragedy has enlarged my understanding (Bigsby 1990: 63).

Gurr (1988: 49) also contends that tragedy should promote a growing awareness of life, through understanding the meaning of death, and through justification for the protagonist's death.

A protagonist, therefore, need not be great, but he needs to have a belief in a cause, hope, dream or passion. It is this belief which at first blinds him to reality, leading to his suffering in proportion to what he can bear, and results in his remorse and suffering. We can identify with this. We are not great humans. We, too, are sometimes blinded by the force of wrong values and dreams.

The tragic protagonist sometimes triumphs over his misguided beliefs. Proctor triumphs over his self-loathing and accepts himself as having some good. Loman never triumphs over his wrong dreams, but takes the best action he can to ensure what he thinks is material success for his family, misguided as it is: he commits suicide. The irony here is that the insurance will probably not pay out because of his act of suicide. Keller, even though he does not triumph over his conscience, comes to a state of such shame and remorse, that he cannot live with himself and commits suicide. He has at least shown development from being a hard, uncaring man, to one who realises the extent of his social responsibility.

As previously asserted, Miller prescribes what he sees as basic elements of tragedy as the hero's sense of indignation and his drive to evaluate himself justly, which results in his remorse and suffering, as well as the hero's desire to question the structure of the universe, fate or society, that degrades him, and in so doing, to find his position in the society or order of the universe (Carson: 80). In the introduction to his Collected Plays, Miller explains that "the intensity of the hero's commitment to his course [and]... the intensity, the human passion to surpass his given bounds, the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role" are vital elements in Tragedy (Weales: 166). "Evils" against which Miller makes the tragic protagonists fight are selfishness in various forms such as materialism, self-indulgence and the desire to be thought well of by neighbours. Instead, he sees voluntary moral and social accountability as a desirable aim (Carson: 154).

As Miller has been described as a "religious writer" (Carson: 154), it stands to conclude that the suffering of the tragic protagonists in their systems of capitalism, socialism, McCarthyism or even Nazism, tests the heroes and enables their growth from selfishness, pride and despair, to a discovery that they should be socially conscious. The characters' qualities combine insight and blindness, doubt and assertiveness, and this makes them avoid at times, and confront and accept at other times, their core beings (Carson: 155).

The qualities of Miller's heroes reflect his personal concerns. Having experienced the Great Depression and Nazi anti-Semitism, Miller refuses to believe that man is a helpless victim of circumstances, but rather that he has a choice in how he approaches these circumstances (Carson: 155). Miller's tragedies end in hope - he

believes that the greatest enemy to life is despair, and the only way to counteract it is to have faith and hope. Miller is thus "the spokesman for those who yearn for the comfortable certainty of a belief, but whose critical intelligence will not allow them to accept the consolations of traditional religions" (Carson: 126).

3.6 Reaction of the audience to the suffering of the tragic protagonist

According to Miller's theory of tragedy, the audience experiences terror because the protagonist challenges the universe/ cosmos that seems just and stable and they fear their concepts of the universe and their selves being uprooted and re-evaluated (Weales: 144). Simultaneously, a moral code in the midst of evil and society is implied by the death of the protagonist.

As has been stated, Christian and Greek tragedy differ in the catharsis that the audience experiences: there is still pity for the protagonist, but instead of being terrified of the power and mystery of the gods (as in Greek tragedy), there is a "kind of reverend dread" in Christian tragedy (Carson: 79). The suffering of the protagonist is understandable and acceptable because the universe is understandable and morally just. The effect of the protagonist's suffering on the Greek audience, according to Aristotle, was a mingling of fear for one's own fate, terror for the power of the gods, and pity for the protagonist.

The effect Miller achieves is to enable the audience to see a structure, a causal connection, and to make each person question his own place in the cosmos. To do this, Miller tries to make his characters real psychologically, so that the audience can identify more readily with them. He never creates them to be mechanical, depersonalised or caricatures without choices. His aim has been to present in a more easily understandable way, the connections between things and influences by things, to suggest a world with meaning (Carson: 150). John Proctor is a man who makes a mistake by lusting after Abigail, and then waiting too long before telling the truth. Eddie Carbone is a man who lives passionately, and refuses to acknowledge and deal with his illicit passion. Joe Keller loves his family so much that it blinds him to his social responsibilities and Willy Loman is a victim of a society that offers him no value as a human. These men are fully formed individuals whose choices and conflicts and battles can be representative of man in general. Everyone faces difficulties and choices.

Referring to Death of a Salesman, Carson (59) commends Miller's ability to evoke "an appropriate blend of pity, fear and consolation - pity for Willy, fear that we may be as self-deluding as he, and hope based on the knowledge that we can, if we so decide, take control of our lives." Can we ask more of a serious drama of the twentieth century?

The four dramas discussed in this chapter have thus all shown, to some degree or another, aspects of tragedy, whether they are aspects associated with traditional Greek and Christian tragedies, or aspects associated with Miller's own theory of the possibility of victory in tragedy and thus in life.