

**VESTIGES OF GREEK TRAGEDY IN THREE MODERN PLAYS –  
EQUUS, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, AND LONG DAY’S JOURNEY  
INTO NIGHT**

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## ABSTRACT

### VESTIGES OF TRAGEDY IN THREE MODERN PLAYS- EQUUS, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, and LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

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This thesis analyses three modern plays that are identified as modern tragedies, **Equus**, **A View From the Bridge** and **Long Day's Journey Into the Night**, to find out whether they share certain themes with classical Greek tragedies. These themes are namely values and conflict, hamartia and learning through suffering. Three Greek plays, **Agamemnon**, **Oedipus Rex** and **Medea** will be used as foils to conduct this comparative study. The study will aim to support the view that these major themes appear both in ancient Greek and modern tragedies.

**Keywords:** tragedy, Greek, modern, ethics, hamartia, mathos.

## ÖZ

### YUNAN TRAJEDİSİNİN ÜÇ MODERN OYUNDAKİ İZLERİ: EQUUS, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

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Bu çalışmada, modern trajedi olarak anılan üç modern oyunun, **Equus**, **A View from the Bridge** ve **Long Day's Journey into Night**'in, eski Yunan trajedileriyle ortak temalar paylaşıp paylaşmadıkları incelenmiştir. Bu temalar sırasıyla değerler ve çatışma, "hamartia", ve acı çekerek öğrenmedir. Üç eski Yunan trajedisi **Agamemnon**, **Kral Oedipus** ve **Medea** bu karşılaştırmalı çalışmada kullanılmışlardır. Bu tez, bu temel temaların hem Yunan trajedisinde hem de modern trajedide bulunduğunu savunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: trajedi, Yunan, modern, etik, hamartia, mathos.

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“I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work”.

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003

Signature

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

#### 1.1.1 The Definition Of Tragedy

A **Handbook to Literature** defines tragedy as an attempt to demonstrate the “tragic sense of life”:

the sense that human beings are inevitably doomed, through their own failures or errors or even the ironic action of their virtues, or through the nature of fate, destiny, or the human condition to suffer, fail, and die. ... The tragic impulse celebrates courage and dignity in the face of defeat and attempts to portray the grandeur of the human spirit (521-522).

It is quite difficult to introduce a comprehensive definition of tragedy. Silk points out that “For Aristotle in the **Poetics**, tragedy is an entity that which has shown variations over the course of time, and an entity whose specimens present marked variations, even in their ‘developed’ form, but nevertheless an entity whose specimens pose no problem of identification” (6). Even in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Aristotle considered Tragedy as a genre with different forms, and in the following centuries there has been more alterations and changes to it.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, critics such as Thomas Aquinas, Averroes and Boethius gave tragedy the meaning of a kind of a narrative about the fall and the sufferings of an eminent character, with an emphasis on the high and elevated language (Eagleton, 11-12). These explanations echo Aristotle’s original conception of tragedy.

In the twentieth century, critics such as C.S. Lewis, A. C. Bradley and Ulrich Simon assert that to be called a tragedy, a story has to be “more than mere victimage; it must involve a courageous resistance to one’s fate” (Eagleton, 15). These critics claim that a fall or reversal of fortune does not make an event a

tragedy, the reaction of the protagonist to the event is what differentiates between tragedy and pathos.

Eagleton summarises the most important aspects of tragedy:

The traditionalist conception of tragedy turns on a number of distinctions - between fate and chance, free will and destiny, inner flaw and outer circumstance, the noble and ignoble, blindness and insight, historical and universal, the alterable and inevitable, the truly tragic and the merely piteous, heroic defiance and ignominious inertia - which for the most part no longer have force for us. (Eagleton, 21-22)

This long quote does not assert a magic formula for a tragedy or a simple definition of it. In contrast, it provides a range of threads that are existent in the so-called tragic plays. This suggests that any play written in any time period which concerns itself with a number of the mentioned aspects might qualify as a candidate for being a tragic play.

### 1.1.2 Greek Tragedy

The roots of tragedy lie in the ancient Greek religious festivals for Dionysius in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Playwrights competed in those festivals with three tragedies and a satyr play. As Greek tragedies were not public entertainment but rituals, they had a "rigid pattern" (Valency, 4). This pattern was thoroughly studied by Aristotle, whose **Poetics** is the primary source for all who deal with tragedy, whether Greek or modern. Aristotle analysed the elements of Greek tragedy in great detail, and defined tragedy as:

Tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; ...; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (Lesky, 5).

According to Aristotle, the most important element is the plot, which is the incidents of the play, as "character gives men qualities, but it is their actions- what they do- that brings them happiness or misery" (Valency, 56). He asserted that the events in a play should happen unexpectedly but at the same time consequently, so that there was an element of surprise as well as realism. The most important aspects of a plot are the conflict, peripeteia (reversal) and anagnorisis (recognition) (Valency, 72). The tragic hero faces a conflict, and

because of the way he deals with this conflict his fortune is reversed and through this he comes to a recognition of his predicament.

Portraying the character traits and the psychology of the tragic heroes were not an essential aspect of Greek tragedies. Valency states that: "character development was not an outstanding element in Greek drama" (22), and adds that "until the time of Euripides, there is very little soul-searching" (90). It is in Euripides' plays such as **Medea** that the audience is given a chance to glimpse at the psyche of the characters

Despite the fact that psychology was not taken into consideration in Greek Tragedy, there were some characteristics each tragic protagonist had: "The man who is tragically doomed should be neither morally perfect nor depraved, he should be essentially like ourselves, though of some greater stature" (Lesky 17). Thus, the tragic heroes were mostly man of high status, such as rulers, noblemen or people of eminence in a society. According to Aristotle, "the tragic hero must be such as to induce the audience to identify with his suffering" (in Valency, 75) so that he can arouse pity and the purgation of fear. No one would feel pity for a morally bad man who faces terrible events and suffers, and people would not accept the fact that a perfectly moral man has to suffer so much.

At this point, the question why such an eminent person faces a tragic event may arise. Frye partly replies to this question when he writes: "The tragedy that happens to the hero does not depend on his moral status. If it is casually related to something he has done, as it is generally is, the tragedy is in the inevitability of the consequences of the act, not in its moral significance as an act" (38). The act that usually causes the dire consequences, which is the hero's "fall", is called "hamartia". According to Aristotle, hamartia means "the intellectual failure to grasp what is right, a failure of human insight amidst the confusion of life" (in Lesky, 17). Thus through hamartia, the tragic hero is faced with a tragic fall. Even if the tragedy does not happen because of a moral flaw, because the hero is not able to calculate the results of his decisions or actions, this act becomes his hamartia.

Being a tragic hero, the protagonist of Greek tragedy faces his fall with such dignity that he inspires the audience elated feelings despite the pessimism of the play. Greek tragedies assert that "life holds no promise of security or

stability, but man should live and die in dignity” (Valency, 7).

### **1.1.3 Modern Tragedy**

What is meant by Modern tragedy is whether modern plays can be related to the Greek Tragedies of the classical period. As Orr points out,

part of the continuity is provided by formal aesthetic rules attributed to Aristotle, which demand a tragic hero with a distinctive weakness causing a reversal of personal fortune, a unity of time, place and action, a tragic climax purging the emotions of the audience, and a realisation by the fallen hero of the true horror of his fate. (xi)

Although modern tragedies are written for very different cultures, they have certain common traits with Greek tragedies. The main similarity is that a tragic hero is needed for such a play. A brief definition of a tragic character as offered by McCollom includes a person superior to most people but who is destroyed through hubris, hamartia or a rigid belief in what he holds to be right for him (2). The tragic hero needs to be courageous enough to stand against forces against his beliefs. Mason suggests that "tragedy requires heroes to assert their defiance of adverse circumstances, and in the process express their feeling of processing and 'I' which confronts the universe" (26).

These characteristics apply to most modern plays that are considered to be tragedies. However, there can be different interpretations of the terminology. For instance, the weakness of the hero is defined differently by Miller: "inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of rightful status" (18). Thus, it is not necessarily an intellectual error of judgement.

Another continuous trend is the aim of tragedy. While for Aristotle it aimed to get the audience rid of certain emotions such as terror and pity and arouse them spiritually by the courage of the hero, O'Neill describes his motives in writing tragedies as follows: "What I am after is to get an audience leaving the theatre with an exultant feeling from seeing somebody on the stage facing life, fighting against the eternal odds" (in Williams, 116). According to O'Neill, the struggle of mankind against conflicts to shape his own life is enough to make him a hero, even if he is unsuccessful in the end (in Williams, 116).

Apart from these Aristotelian elements, modern tragedy differs from the Greek tragedies in two main aspects, one of which is the protagonist's social status, and the second is the emphasis on characterisation and the psychological features of the characters.

One of the major differences between Greek tragedy and modern tragedy is the social standing of the hero. In Greek tragedy the heroes are from a higher class whereas in modern tragedy, as Miller argues, "common man is as apt a subject for tragedy" (16). Critics like Lesky have tried to account for the reason of this change. He links it to the development of middle class tragedies in the last century: "The demand for the tragic hero's high social standing has been replaced by what we might call the significant depth of his downfall: a 'tragic' experience involves a fall from an illusory world of security and happiness into the depth of inescapable anguish" (9). So to achieve the aim of tragedy, which is to raise people's awareness of their unstable lives, there is no need for a character of high status. Valency explains it as follows:

Human nature, doubtless, has not changed essentially since the time of Aristotle, but social conditions have altered to the point where it has become possible to portray tragically those who were once considered the subject of comedy... What remains is a sense of the sadness of existence, a deep and poignant pathos, but not the tragic of Greek tragedy. (6)

Both critics similarly point out the importance of the feeling tragic plays evoke in the audience, rather than the protagonist's social status.

Modern tragedy also differs from its Greek counterparts in that more importance is given to characterisation while the characters in Greek tragedy tend to be flat. "In the type of plot characteristic of modern drama the manipulation of a reversal through a discovery... with its emphasis on character, recognitions are more often psychological than revelations of kinship" (Valency, 74). The characters of Modern tragedy have more psychological depth as well as more psychological conflicts within, thus the discoveries they make tend to be inner ones rather than physical facts of their lives. One more point to be considered is the fact that Greek tragedies have a divine mode, where many events seem to be precipitated by the Gods and Goddesses whereas the modern tragedies tend to deal with social aspects as well as dealing with

psychological aspects of the characters (Orr, xii).

Therefore, the main aspect that makes a modern play a tragedy is what it focuses on or what it tries to convey to its audience. Orr mentions Raymond Williams' formula as a link between the works of two different cultures and periods: "The essential tragic experience is that of irreparable human loss" (xii). The courage and determination the characters show, their suffering and loss is what makes their stories tragedies. In Miller's **Death of a Salesman** Linda's outburst reflects Miller's attitude to the tragic hero: "But he is a human being, and a terrible thing has happened to him. ... Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person" (56). As Miller considers, "tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing- his sense of dignity" (17).

Eagleton claims that tragedy is universal, and that "all tragedies are specific: there are tragedies of particular peoples and genders, of nations and social groups... not to speak of those hole-in-the corner calamities of obscure individual lives." According to him those ordinary and insignificant people have nothing in common "other than the fact of suffering. But suffering is a mightily powerful language to share in common" (xvi).

## 1.2 Aim of the Study

This thesis will concern itself with three Greek Tragedies: Aeschylus' **Agamemnon**; Sophocles' **Oedipus Rex**, Euripides' **Medea**; and three Modern tragedies: Peter Shaffer's **Equus**, Arthur Miller's **A View From the Bridge** and Eugene O'Neill's **Long Day's Journey into Night**.

The thesis will try to support the view that, the three modern plays can be considered as tragedies since they share three major thematic characteristics with Greek tragedies of the classical period. These themes are respectively Values and Conflicts, Hamartia and Fate, Tragic Experience and Learning Through Suffering.

The plays in discussion will also be referred to as **AGA, OR, MEDEA, EQUUS, VIEW** and **JOURNEY** when in brackets throughout this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### ETHICS: VALUES AND CONFLICT

Tragic plays involve a serious conflict faced by the tragic hero. In Burian's view, there are three major characteristics of tragic conflict: It is extreme; it cannot be explained as a simple clash of free choices; and it is not only related to a single character, it is more universal, meaning it has larger consequences (in Easterling, 181-182).

The tragic conflict is usually such a conflict that it cannot be solved through finding a middle way or the compromise of the hero. As Steiner points out, if the conflict can be solved through technical or social means, such a play is called "serious drama, but not tragedy" (8). Moreover, although the conflict may seem to arise from the individual choice of the hero, it usually involves past actions and their results, as well as ignorance, fate or the gods' intervention (Burian, in Easterling, 182). A tragic conflict has consequences not only for the character who faces it, but usually for a whole family, country and, on a symbolical level, for all humanity. This is true especially for the Greek plays, in which the tragic heroes are usually eminent people whose fall or suffering could have an effect on the whole society, even the whole country.

Johnston and Grandy classify conflicts into two kinds (Internet 1). The first one is when there is a case of man's miscalculation of reality which brings about the fatal situation, and the second type when a man is between two conflicting principles and has to decide which way to act. For such a conflict to happen, the tragic hero has to have certain values that put him into conflict with external conditions. In Greek tragedies, the conflict does not arise due to the character's inner or psychological problems. They arise from external obligations or situations so that he has to make a decision; and the situation is one that threatens his conviction of what is right. In modern tragedies, the protagonists have

also some inner problems that can lead to conflict although some other external obligations might have created that inner conflict due to their previous experiences.

In this chapter, the plays under discussion will be analysed in terms of the values of tragic heroes, their sense of what is right, and ensuing conflicts.

The protagonists of Greek tragedies have their own sets of values which they try to protect even when these result in inevitable conflicts. The tragic heroes stand for their beliefs, and are usually faced with a reversal of fortune.

## **2.1 Agamemnon**

In the first play of Aeschylus' **Orestes Trilogy**, the main character Agamemnon faces some conflicting situations due to his conception of family and leadership. These situations may not have arisen if Agamemnon had less firm conception of leadership or did not try to stand behind this notion until the end. However, being a character of tragedy, Agamemnon does not retreat from his chosen path. Agamemnon's values are a typical example of a good leader and ruler of his country and his culture. The controversies he faces challenge his loyalty to his principles, but he does not let his personal feelings stop him from doing what he considers is his duty.

The first violation of the codes of his culture is the elopement of Agamemnon's sister-in-law, Helen. She has ran away to Troy with her lover Paris. According to Agamemnon's values, her adultery is an offence to the family and to the country, and he believes it should be punished. He presupposes that his fleet also believe in this expedition: "They are right in their fury-bound frenzy" (AGA, 38). Thus, this presupposition leads Agamemnon and his country to war with the Trojans. Kitto remarks that "Agamemnon has taken it for granted that a war for a wanton woman is a proper thing: it is his conception of Dike" (1939, 72). In Greek, "Dike" meant justice or the concept of rightness, and Agamemnon behaves according to what he thinks is right.

When the tragic hero is the leader of a country or a person of high status, his/her struggle becomes more than a personal conflict and any offence against his house is an offence against the whole country. The crimes of Helen

and Paris have caused the ruin of their countries, Greece and Troy respectively (Kitto, 1956, 12). Also, Agamemnon's decision to lead the whole country to war has caused pain in every family.

Just as he is preparing for the expedition, Agamemnon is faced with another contravention. Artemis, a virgin goddess who is against this war, demands Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter or she will stop the fleet from sailing by sending adverse winds. The goddess imposes a collision between parenthood and Agamemnon's military role, thus it is a difficult choice for him. Despite his responsibility as a leader, Agamemnon is now in a dilemma and feels helpless:

This fate is hard to disobey,  
And hard if I obey (AGA, 38)

Goldhill suggests that "Agamemnon knows that either course of action - and one must be chosen- is disastrous. This conflict of competing and necessary obligations is known as a tragic 'double bind' " (28). If Agamemnon agrees to sacrifice his daughter out of allegiance to his fleet, he will commit infanticide. On the other hand, if he decides to save his daughter, this means deserting his fleet "Oh which / Is worse? But how can I betray / My fleet and fail my allies?" (AGA, 38). This is an example of an extreme conflict. Agamemnon does not have the chance to bargain or try to compromise and solve this problem which is imposed by a goddess.

This choice of Agamemnon has another implication for the play. The family's past is full of infanticides, which Cassandra refers to: "No no: to a house God hates, / full of family butcheries" (AGA, 70); and later the images she visualises in her prophecy also refer to that sin: "Don't they have the look of children / Murdered by their dearest?" (AGA, 76). Agamemnon, who is already carrying a burden from his ancestors, transfers it fully onto himself. If Agamemnon could resist his own idea of right and give up the expedition, he would have set himself free from the guilt of infanticide, but he could not do that. Lukacs defines a tragic protagonist as someone who "lives only to achieve absolute and impossible values, rejects any compromise and disdains the values of the world" (in Palmer, 69). Similarly, Agamemnon behaves according to what he believes is the ultimate code of honour for a leader, and he does not let

his love for his daughter and family stop him from defending his values and his family. Thus, in the clash between values, Agamemnon chooses to defend his values doggedly which leads him to his death. Tragedy requires offences and sins to be punished, so he pays for his sins.

## 2. 2 Oedipus Rex

In **Oedipus Rex** the values of the main character lead to conflicts and then to his downfall, just like in **Agamemnon**. Oedipus, who is the son of the king of Corinth, has fled from his country because of a curse that declared he would kill his father and marry his mother. Through his wanderings, he has arrived at the city of Thebes, and saved its people from the Sphinx by answering his riddle. The citizens declared Oedipus king. Being a responsible ruler like Agamemnon, Oedipus has to think about his people's welfare. When the people plead to him to save them from the plague that endangers them, it appears to Oedipus as a new riddle to be solved. He tells them that he shares their pain and that he has sent Creon, his brother in law, to the Oracle for guidance:

But when he comes,  
Whatever the god requires, upon my honour  
It shall be done. (OR, 27)

When the answer arrives, Oedipus is not satisfied, because it is in the form of a riddle. The reason of the drought is that the murderer of the previous king Laius has not been punished yet. Oedipus' task is to find the murderer and punish him so that Thebes can gain back its prosperity. Oedipus sets on this quest readily:

I will start afresh; and bring everything into the light.  
All praise to Phoebus- and thanks, for your part, to you –  
For thus pointing out our duty to the dead.  
You will find me as willing an ally as you could wish  
In the cause of God and our country. (OR, 29)

Oedipus believes if he can decipher this unsolved riddle from the past and punish the murderer, he will rescue his people. Oedipus also reveals his virtuousness, his respect both for the Gods and Laius. Murder is an offence against the gods, and by working out the source of this crime, he will have avenged both the king and his God.

In the beginning Oedipus decides it is his duty to solve the riddle as the king. Ironically, it turns out that he is the cause of the city's troubles. Unknowingly, he has murdered its former king, who at the same time was his father, and he has married his queen, who actually is his own mother. The curse upon him has caught up with him, and now it is going to taint his city. How he faces and resolves his conflict will have an effect on whole humanity in terms of exposing the possible unintended consequences of the actions of human kind. Oedipus has never meant to kill his father and have children by his own mother; however, everything he has done in the past, including leaving his home town to avoid this fate has turned out to have dreadful consequences.

**Oedipus Rex** is a play of conflicts. Oedipus finds himself in conflict with different people in the play. Firstly, he finds himself at odds with the prophet Tiresias. When the latter refuses to share his knowledge about the murder of Laius and who has done it, Oedipus protests: "What? Something you know, and will not tell? You mean / To fail us and see your city perish? (OR, 35). Oedipus tries to solve this conflict by forcing the prophet to speak. When the prophet finally shares his knowledge in the form of a puzzle, Oedipus dismisses him: "Shall I bear more of this? Out of my sight! / Go! Quickly, go!" (OR, 38). Oedipus is not trying to solve the conflict calmly or effectively; he is just showing off his power.

Oedipus falls into conflict with his wife as well. Because Jocasta must have started to guess where Oedipus' quest to discover the truth about the murder leads to, she asks him not to ponder over this problem: "If you want to live, this quest/ Must not go on" (OR, 55). Jocasta is not blinded by her pride as Oedipus is, and she has begun to suspect the truth about her husband. Whereas Oedipus believes he should pursue the riddle until he gets the right answer to it: "I must pursue this trail to the end, / Till I have unravelled the mystery of my birth" (OR, 55). As a righteous ruler, there is no other choice; the conflict should be solved at all costs. He tries to do everything that is in his power: sends Creon to the Oracle and sends for Tiresias. Later he sends for the witness of Laius's murder and the shepherd that saved him when he was abandoned as a baby. He makes a promise to his people: "I mean to fight for him now, as I would fight / For my own father, and leave no way untried / To bring to light the killer of Laius" (OR, 33).

The major conflict Oedipus faces is with his fate, therefore with the Gods. Most of the actions he does are to evade the dangers the Gods warn him against, such as the prophecy that he would murder his father and sleep with his mother. Oedipus decided to flee his hometown, leaving behind his life as a prince: "I fled away, putting the stars / Between me and Corinth, never to see home again, / That no such horror should ever come to pass" (OR, 47). However, "there are invisible Powers in the background and there is a secret game that they are playing" (Bowra, in Waldock, 151). There is no possibility that Oedipus can find out his real enemy that is plotting against him: the Divine order.

Oedipus' running away from Corinth shows that he initially had strong moral codes and he did not want to violate these. Despite his careful intentions, the prophecy has come true and Oedipus has not been able to prevent it. In the end, when he discovers what he has done is against his moral codes, he shows he is able to bear up the pain only by punishing himself. When the chorus criticises him of not ending his life but just blinding himself: "yet to my thinking this act was ill-advised; / It would have been better to die than live in blindness" (OR, 63) Oedipus defends his decision saying: "I will not believe that this was not the best / That could have been done. Teach me no other lesson" (OR, 63). Blinding himself is symbolic. When he has eyes, he can see, or understand, what he has done wrong. His wrong is the ultimate, the worst punishment he can get. Whatever wrong he sees, understands from now on, will be of no importance. Therefore, he needs no eyes to see, to understand. Also, he has learnt that "seeing" does not necessarily save one from one's destiny, his sight has not prevented him from committing the errors, so it becomes redundant.

Oedipus' conflicts derive from his past actions though he is not aware of this fact in the beginning. The way he tries to defend his beliefs through anger and exerting aggression on Tiresias might imply he is not a temperate man, but Oedipus certainly has many solid virtues; he is righteous, courageous, loving, caring and honest. Even in the face of conflicts he believes that these values are worth maintaining.

### 2.3 Medea

Unlike Agamemnon and Oedipus, Medea is not a ruler of high order. On the contrary, she is an outcast in Corinth, since she comes from a different, less civilised country. However, her conflict has effects on her own house and the royal house of Corinth. She, also, has both her own values and those of her forefathers, like Agamemnon and Oedipus.

Medea is from a different country so she belongs to a different culture. As her husband Jason says:

The country that you left is primitive, but now  
You live in Greece. You know what justice means  
Enjoy the benefits of Law, not the rule of force  
(MEDEA, 37)

Jason means that Medea's culture is lawless, and that power is the only rule, whereas in Greece there are stronger codes of law and justice. Despite his emphasis on law and justice, by marrying the Corinthian princess when he is already married to Medea, Jason has disregarded one of those norms: the marriage vows. Medea's primitive past does not prevent her to have a strong conception of right and justice, and she accuses Jason for his lack of principle:

Gone is all faith in oaths. I don't understand-  
Can you really think the gods by whom we swore  
No longer rule? Or that now there is new ordinance for men,  
When you know you have betrayed your promises to me  
(MEDEA, 33)

Despite her primitive background, Medea is far more virtuous than Jason in that her concept of right and abiding holy vows is stronger.

The chorus points out that "When love overwhelms a man, / It can destroy his virtue / and his good name" (MEDEA, 45), and foreshadows the destruction that will ensue. Medea is a passionate character. When Jason betrays her, she threatens to take revenge from him to defend her beliefs in her fury with what he has done: "Jason's whole house I shall demolish"(MEDEA, 57). Jason has now acquired two houses, this threat implies both her house and Jason's new house; Corinth's royal house.

Medea's revenge is an action not expected of women of the Greek antiquity. The traditional Greek idea of women was that of submissive wives

who did not involve in the daily business of men and were not supposed to show strong feelings. Medea, a passionate woman, finds herself at odds with this system. The question that arises is should she be submissive or should she take revenge? In her fight for her beliefs, Medea decides to do everything that she thinks is necessary. To revenge herself on Jason, she resolves to do the most extreme deed: "And leave the country, guilty of / The most unholy crime, the murder of my sons" (MEDEA, 57). She is a primitive woman but has a religion of her own. In her religion killing one's children is the worst sin. She is even ready to commit that sin to justify her being betrayed. Her plan includes not only Jason, but also his new wife and his father-in-law as well: "I'll send to their death- / The father, the daughter and my husband" (MEDEA 25). Compared to what she sacrifices by killing her children, killing the others is of secondary importance and comes to her automatically. When she puts her plan into action, Corinth is left without its king and princess; the whole royal house is destroyed, except for Jason who will then have a life of misery and pain:

But he, with God's help, will pay the price.  
He will never see alive again the sons  
He had by me; nor will father children  
With his new bride, for by my poison she, the wretch,  
Is doomed to die a wretched death (MEDEA, 57)

Letting Jason live a living death is her ultimate punishment for him. The most evident dilemma Medea faces in the play is when she has to decide whether to murder her children or not. This decision clashes with her sense of motherhood, but it is the only way to assert her sense of right and justice.

On the whole, the tragic heroes have some similarities despite their different situations. McDermott compares Medea and Agamemnon's cases. The main similarity is that "after anguished internal debate a parent will here undertake the sacrifice of a loved child, despite the personal pain derived from the loss" (76). As Agamemnon has to choose between his role as a father and as a leader before the sacrifice of his daughter, Medea also shifts from her role as a mother to the role of a betrayed passionate woman. However, Agamemnon's decision is partly shaped by necessity and divine laws, whereas Medea makes the decision herself. Agamemnon's decision seems more justifiable given

his status in society, while Medea's "search for vengeance was an acceptable enough end in itself in the heroic world, it loses legitimacy when it requires abnegation of both the familial value of *philia* and proper civic allegiance" (McDermott, 77). Thus, Medea's decision is a wrong one in terms of collective values, although it is a right one according to her values. Compared to Agamemnon's decisions, Oedipus' decisions are more justifiable, as most of them are necessitated by external factors. For example, leaving his country to prevent the curse and deciding to investigate Laius' murder as the king are more acceptable in terms of social values. He tries to be responsible, and sacrifices his life as a ruler to find out the reality about his birth and Laius' death. However, when faced with a conflict, Oedipus tries to solve them passionately like Medea does. This can be seen in his arrogant attitude towards Tiresias and Creon while he is questioning them to find the murderer of Laius.

Similar to the protagonists of Greek tragedies, modern protagonists also have some set values they firmly believe in. Although some of these beliefs may not be socially acceptable, the characters try to stick to those values even when they find themselves at odds with life. The modern protagonists also experience a fall from their initially secure status, which is an illusion, given their existent psychological torments.

## **2.4 Equus**

In **Equus**, the tragic character Dysart's job as a psychiatrist is to cure children in order to help them adjust to everyday life, so the way he feels and treats them has an impact on his society. Although Dysart is quite different from the characters of Greek Tragedy in that he is not a royal person or a leader, he has an important role in his society. Dysart seems to have a secure life, his status as a doctor makes him respectable, but as an individual he is troubled. Dysart is in conflict because of his own values, just as the Greek tragic characters are. However, the way Dysart responds to his conflict is quite different from how Agamemnon, Oedipus or Medea does.

The major conflicts are between Dysart's beliefs about leading one's life and his responsibility as a psychiatrist, and between his ideals and his actual

life style. Different from the Greek tragedy, in which the tragic character has no inner dilemmas but is at odds with a higher order, Dysart does have some inner conflicts. Throughout the play, Dysart psychoanalyses himself along with Alan, a young patient in his care. From these clashes spring his major dilemma: whether or not to cure Alan.

In the beginning, Dysart is represented as a responsible and successful psychiatrist, who is willing to do his job in the best way. His expertise is treating psychologically disturbed children. Alan Strang, a boy, who has blinded six horses in the stables he had been working in, is brought to him by the magistrate. She thinks Dysart will be able to empathise with Alan because Dysart is known for his interest in ancient times and strange beliefs and rituals, and Alan's case is reminiscent of a bizarre ritual. She believes that only Dysart can understand Alan, whereas the others will "be cool and exact. And underneath they'll be revolted, and immovably English" (EQUUS, 19). The magistrate is aware that Alan's crime is caused by a strange driving force that no one will be able to find out except Dysart.

Alan's relationship with horses and his blinding of six horses will turn out to be a primitive ritual, which points to the main aspect of **Equus**, symbolising the clash between the primitive and the civilised. Through Alan, Dysart comes face to face with the primitive human soul who is able to do whatever he does passionately and instinctively. What really happens to Dysart is that through his relationship with Alan, he realises "his own vital lack" (MacMurrough-Kavanagh, 111). This is the lack of dynamism, of primordial impulses, and of insight. Dysart is "another frostbitten soul" (Gianakaris, 102) who cannot overcome the conflict between his spiritual and his physical world. Despite his rich spiritual world in which he dreams of the Mediterranean civilisation and their vital culture, Dysart's literal world is quite different:

Then, in the morning, I put away my books on the cultural shelf, close up the kodachromine snap of Mount Olympos, touch my reproduction statue of Dionysus for luck- and go off to hospital to treat him for insanity" (EQUUS, 83).

Dysart's everyday life reveals the conflict in his life. The fact that he

has a reproduction statue of Dionysus is significant, as Dionysus was the Greek God of wine, and represents the primitiveness, passion and direct experience (MacMurrugh-Kavanagh,111). Dysart yearns for those raw passions; but being a professional psychiatrist he would be expected to stand for the Apollonian way of thinking, which is rational and self-controlled. Dysart believes people should be able to feel strongly and passionately about things and he envies Alan for his ability to live out his passions, and be primitive: "Oh the primitive world,' I say. 'What instinctual truths were lost in it!' And while I sit there, baiting a poor unimaginative woman with the word, that freaky boy tries to conjure the reality" (EQUUS, 82).

Alan's passion and worship becomes destructive. The magistrate, a member representing the society, believes that "Worship is not destructive" (EQUUS, 81). That is why there must be something wrong with Alan, which needs to be cured. In contrast, Dysart's view is that "it's the core of his life" (EQUUS, 81). Thus, having to cure Alan and making him a normal, Apollonian person causes discord in Dysart. Like most tragic conflicts, this is an extreme situation, in which there is no space for moderation. Dysart has to completely restore his patients back to "normal"; he cannot cure them a little and leave their passion as well. "Normal" is a value Dysart begins to doubt more and more, made clear through his brief dialogue with the magistrate:

HESTHER: A normal life.

DYSART: Normal?

HESTHER: It still means something.

DYSART: Does it? (EQUUS, 62)

His responsibility and the magistrate's pressure to cure Alan trap Dysart. As Plunka asserts, the psychiatrist realises that he has either to sacrifice his conception of passion for his profession, or free himself of his responsibilities and cling to his own values (152).

Dysart's life style foreshadows the result of this conflict. Dysart has an unhappy marriage with a woman he does not get on well. They are just incompatible, and share nothing. "Do you know what it's like for two people to live in the same house as if they were in different parts of the world?" (EQUUS, 61), complains Dysart. He wants more passion in his life, and is interested in

the ancient Greek culture, which was more primitive and passionate. His wife, on the other hand, is described as a reserved woman with very little capacity for passion. Dysart yearns for "one instinctive, absolutely unbrisk person" he could take to Greece (EQUUS, 62). That person can be Alan, but Dysart is forced to cure him and make him a passionless person.

Dysart does not do anything to change his life, despite his desperate longing to lead a life according to his own passion. He longs to quit his job and settle in Greece, but he cannot do it because he "can't see it, because my educated, average head is being held at the wrong angle" (EQUUS, 18). Dysart wants to be intuitive and instinctive but he has led a rational, restrained and responsible life for so long that he is incapable of making the change. It is ironic that he wishes he had a passionate nature, but he is not really a passionate man: "he too is without any real worship" (Gianakaris, 102). He cannot overcome this obstacle: "I can't jump because the bit forbids it. And my own basic force- my horse-power, if you like- is too little" (EQUUS, 18). Dysart is aware of his lack of dynamism, and his inability to change.

Unlike the ends of Agamemnon and Oedipus, in which the conflict is solved either by death or self-punishment, Dysart's conflict is resolved with his own decision. By the time the play ends, Dysart has become more and more involved in his discord with modern life, which was already there even before he met Alan. He cannot make the decision to defend his own beliefs, and finally the only thing he can do is to make a rational decision, and obediently to resign to curing Alan: "You are going to be well. I'm going to make you well, I promise you... You'll be here for a while, but I'll be here too" (EQUUS, 107). This implies that just as he cannot leave aside his wife and dull life, the social pressure prevents Dysart from behaving according to his own principles, and forces him to comply with society's values.

Dysart dilemma as a psychiatrist exemplifies another established psychiatrist's views: Jung's theory of the unconscious. According to MacMurrough-Kavanagh, Jung's theory is grounded on the view that "man becomes whole, integrated; calm, fertile, and happy when ... the conscious and the unconscious have learned to live at peace and to complement each other" (104). In Dysart's case, there is no harmony between his conflicting

situation. At the end of the play, Dysart is already a living dead, as he implies, “all reined up in old language and old assumptions” (EQUUS, 18). Dysart realises that he will never overcome his conflicts, but will be a slave to the system he no longer believes in.

## **2.5 View from the Bridge**

Tragedy claims to be universal and relating to the whole mankind. In Miller's play the social context has a more important impact on determining the events that lead up to the tragedy. The situation of Eddie as an Italian immigrant living in the Italian ghetto makes the play quite circumstantial rather than universal. However, the conflict arising from Eddie Carbone's values and the way he deals with them give the play a universal dimension.

Similar to Dysart, Eddie has severe inner conflicts. On the one hand Eddie is sexually attracted to his niece, on the other hand his strict conception of social taboos prevent him from admitting his incestuous desires even to himself. When his wife, Beatrice, tries to talk to him about his problem, he reacts strongly to it: "I can't. I can't talk about it" (VIEW, 36). Such a desire is a violation of a taboo in any civilised social order and is totally against Eddie's principles as a family man; so he tries hard to repress this feeling. This creates a discord in his personality. He can neither face this feeling, nor can he accept that Cathy is a grown up woman now, that she has to stand on her own feet without his protection. His way of dealing with this disturbing situation is to patronise her and restrict her freedom.

When Cathy and Rodolpho begin to flirt, Eddie feels hurt on two levels. The first one is the conscious level, on which his upbringing tells him to look after his niece and protect her from any possible harm: "She is my niece and I'm responsible for her" (VIEW, 68). He is the traditional male, the head of the family, protecting his female family members from other males, who might seduce them. This is the duty his social context assigns him. The second level Eddie feels hurt is on the subconscious level. He feels hurt because although he cannot have her, another man is going to have her, which is unbearable: “I worked like a dog for twenty years so a punk could have her, so that’s what I’ve done” (VIEW, 49). Orr remarks that Rodolpho is actually challenging

Eddie's household possession, and that it is not totally wrong that Eddie seems to be disturbed on the conscious level as well as the subconscious, more passionate level (230).

Eddie, who cannot explain the real reason, tries to stop the couple from going out together and getting married by hiding behind the excuse of family values. As Orr asserts, Eddie's "jealousy transforms itself into authoritarian rage" (230). Eddie shows Rodolpho that he is disturbed by the way he flirts with Cathy: "in your town you wouldn't just drag off a girl without permission, I mean" (VIEW, 52). Following this, Eddie becomes aware that he might be giving away his feelings, and this time uses kinship to justify his objection to their going out together: "Look, kid, I'm not only talking about her. The more you run around like that the more chance you're takin' "(VIEW, 53). If Rodolpho, an illegal immigrant, is seen around, he might get arrested by the authorities. While Eddie seems to be playing the role of a considerate uncle who cares for his niece and also for his relatives, who are illegal immigrants, he is actually trying to cover up his inner dilemma. When he throws Rodolpho out of the house and Cathy tries to leave with Rodolpho, Eddie says: "No, you ain't goin' nowhere, he's the one" (VIEW, 64). When Cathy insists on going with Rodolpho, Eddie retorts: "Not with that" (VIEW, 65). These offensive remarks make Eddie's negative feelings about Rodolpho obvious to all members of the family.

Despite Eddie's efforts to conceal his dilemma with traditional codes of conduct, such statements and his general behaviour towards Rodolpho make the other members of the family become quite aware of Eddie's conflict. Especially his wife realises the reason for his odd behaviour and tries to warn him several times: "All right, that's her ride. What're you gonna stand over her till she's forty? Eddie, I want you to stop it now, you hear me? I don't like it!" (VIEW, 36). Later, she starts to sense Eddie's main problem and warns him more specifically: "Well, then, be an uncle then" (VIEW, 53). By the end of the play, she openly says "You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her!" (VIEW, 83). Eddie cannot accept this, because his incestuous passion does not fit in with his codes of kinship: "That's what you think of me - that I would have such a thought" (VIEW, 83). What is horrible to admit even to himself is impossible to admit to anyone else. Even though his wife knows about his problem, he

cannot open his heart to her; she is also caught up in the disapproval of codes of conduct.

Since Eddie cannot even admit his conflict to himself, he cannot solve it, and the only way out for him would be death. There is no other solution that he could find. There can be no mediation because Eddie can neither give Cathy up, nor own up his feelings and live with them whether he has her or not. Being a good man with solid values and family responsibilities, rather than a bad man who would try to possess her by force, Eddie Carbone cannot bear the collapse of the kind of man he believes himself to be.

Being warned by his wife against his intentions about Cathy and consulting Alfieri the lawyer only to realise he cannot prevent Rodolpho's and Cathy's flirtation legally, Eddie has only one alternative left: to inform against Rodolpho and Marco. Eddie is aware of the possible consequences of this, he knows that informers are socially unacceptable, and that he will become an outcast. However, as a tragic hero, he sticks to his own belief: Rodolpho and Cathy should not be together and just as Agamemnon and Medea did, he proceeds and informs against the brothers although he knows it is morally wrong.

When Eddie has Rodolpho and Marco caught by the authorities, Marco accuses him in front of the neighbours saying, "He killed my children! That one stole the food from my children!" (VIEW, 77), Eddie refuses because he believes he has done everything necessary for them: "He's crazy! I give them the blankets off my bed. Six months I kept them like my own brothers!" (VIEW, 77). Despite this protest, Eddie is aware that he has lost his place in the neighbourhood and that no one will look at him with sympathy any more and he has lost his respect. When he tells Beatrice: "I want my respect" (VIEW, 80), he actually knows he can never get it back; he has done one of the worst crimes for the Italian society in America. In the final confrontation, Marco kills Eddie, which is actually the only way out for him. Being a man who tries to comply with social codes, and even uses them as excuses, becoming a socially unacceptable outcast would be worse for him than death.

Eddie's behaviour exemplifies Lukacs' definition of an obsessed tragic protagonist who cannot adhere to the norms of the real world. Eddie's stand is quite different from that of rational Dysart, who becomes a tamed horse.

Eddie does not accept the “bit”, and he fights passionately for Cathy and his pride. Miller expresses his respect for Eddie by pointing out that he "possesses and exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity and justice" (in Bigsby, 204).

## **2.6 Long Day’s Journey into Night**

O'Neill's play is a play of ongoing conflicts, in which all four characters of the Tyrone family are in conflict both with themselves and with one another. James Tyrone, the father who used to be an actor is constantly in conflict with his elder son Jamie and his younger son Edmund, who is suffering from consumption, and even with his drug-addicted wife Mary.

Very shortly after the play opens, the discord between the father and other members of the family is made clear through their exchanges in conversation. Even a slight joke can lead to a sudden moment of tension and an excuse to snap at each other. In the first scene where all the family members are seen together for the first time, the sons and the mother exchange a joke about James Tyrone’s snoring, and Jamie, the older son quotes Shakespeare. James Tyrone’s response to this joke is quite harsh: “If it takes my snoring to make you remember Shakespeare instead of the dope sheet on ponies, I hope I’ll keep up with it” (JOURNEY, 21).

The family's clash with Tyrone arises from his values: he has given more importance to money and has tried to save as much as possible, so they have never had a proper home and a proper family life. Tyrone uses his frugal upbringing in his childhood as the excuse for his miserly attitude: "It was at home I first learned the value of a dollar and the fear of the poorhouse. I've never been able to believe in my luck since. I've always feared it would change and everything I had would be taken away" (JOURNEY, 146). In Greek tragedies, the hero thinks that he has done the best for his country and family, like Oedipus and Agamemnon do; in a modern tragedy the scale is smaller, where he thinks he is doing all he can for the family, like Tyrone does. Tyrone might have thought he was doing his best to earn money for his family and to provide financial security for them. Until Tyrone realises and admits that his sticking to his own

opinion on how to manage financial affairs has harmed the family, there can be no reconciliation. It is only by the end of the play that he begins to consider he might have been wrong: "A stinking old miser. Well, maybe you're right" (JOURNEY, 146).

Another reason for the ongoing conflicts is James Tyrone's wish to dominate the family by telling them how they should conduct their lives and relationships. Although he has never set a good role-model, he wants his sons to be real gentlemen, who behave themselves and conduct an organised life. When he claims that Jamie is really good for nothing except making jokes, Mary tries to protect her son saying, "He'll turn out all right in the end, you wait and see" (JOURNEY, 18). James Tyrone seems impatient and says "He'd better start soon, then. He's nearly thirty-four" (JOURNEY, 18). The way he imposes his values on other people frustrates them. Tyrone keeps picking at his elder son, Jamie: "Yes, forget! Forget everything and face nothing! It's a convenient philosophy if you've no ambition in life except to-" (JOURNEY, 21). He seems to be a concerned father who is teaching his son, however he is not treating them so as to support them and guide them to a more decent lifestyle. Instead, he is only irritating them by sticking to what he believes is his duty and right as a father.

Tyrone cannot stop himself from imposing his beliefs onto Edmund either. When they reunite at home in the evening, the first thing Tyrone asks Edmund is to turn off the light in the front. When Edmund resists, Tyrone begins to threaten him: "You'll obey me and put out that light or, as big as you are, I'll give you a trashing that'll teach you -!" (JOURNEY, 127-8). Tyrone believes that saving the electricity is very important, and that sons should obey fathers. These views make him act in a way that causes conflict between himself and Edmund, who believes that not using one light bulb will not have dire consequences for the family budget. The father and son have opposing principles, whether they are on trivial subjects or significant subjects make no difference. The clash of opposing views always ends in conflict.

James Tyrone comes into conflict with his wife Mary despite her fragile condition. In the beginning of the play, Tyrone seems to be quite happy that Mary has not been into drugs for some time after her last treatment: "I can't

tell you the deep happiness it gives me, darling, to see you as you've been since you came back to us, your dear old self again" (JOURNEY, 17). However, the tension between them becomes obvious as they are having their first conversation after breakfast. The reason for the conflict is Tyrone's claim that buying land is profitable. Mary seems to have given up fighting him about that subject: "Never mind, James. I know it's a waste of breath trying to convince you you're not a cunning real estate speculator" (JOURNEY, 15). Her resigned manner reveals a marriage full of similar arguments with no change in Tyrone's attitude.

James Tyrone believes in frugality as a means of securing his and his family's lives. According to Tyrone, he is the head of the family and has to think about them. Tyrone thinks he has to ask for some sacrifices from his family so that he can have financial security. This is his view of managing the family life, and he sticks to it until the very end of the play, although finally he seems to have accepted that he has erred as well.

The protagonists of the modern tragedies all share a characteristic with each other: they all have an obsessive belief that they defend till the bitter end of the play. However, when faced with a conflict, the way they respond to it is quite different. Dysart has no power and self-confidence to be able to alter his life, so although he seems to believe firmly in the importance of a life drive, he is unable to fight for his cherished values. Compared to the protagonists of Greek tragedy, he does not appear to be as determined as they are. The fact that he is aware of his weakness rather than his will to stand up for his values makes him a tragic character. James Tyrone shows some awareness that some of his values are not valid for his family, and he admits this. However, he does not alter his attitude in the end. Eddie Carbone is quite different, as he is more of a tragic hero in that he does not lose his belief in the rightness of his values, he even faces death in the end. One difference between Eddie and the other modern protagonists is their level of awareness. Both Dysart and Tyrone are aware of or are beginning to become aware of their weaknesses whereas Eddie cannot admit them even to himself even at the end of the play. Eddie's situation is similar to Agamemnon's when he either has to sacrifice his daughter or let the fleet down by

cancelling the expedition. Both Agamemnon and Eddie have come across two conflicting principles, which challenge their sense of duty and personal dignity. As a result, both believe what they are doing is right, and cannot recognise their error.

## CHAPTER 3

### HAMARTIA: FREE WILL OR FATE?

Tragedy is often based on a tragic character's tragic mistake. Hamartia and hubris are considered to be prominent characteristics of Greek Tragedy. According to Aristotle, hamartia meant an error of judgement or ignorance, which caused the hero to fall from his prior status. On the other hand, hubris means arrogance in the form of insolence, overt pride and ambition, usually deriving from success. The hero's own success and grandeur usually blinds him, so he cannot see where his pride can lead him.

Leslie Ellis introduces a working definition of Greek tragedy as such: "the evocation of fear and pity through the viewing of the intellectual mistake (hamartia) of a character possessed of arete (nobility in character and action)" (21). Ellis claims that "if a modern drama could be found that meets these exigencies, indeed that drama would, by definition, be a tragedy". For a play to be a tragedy, the main character has to make a choice and carry it out so that he can face the consequences. In Sewall's words,

Only man in action, man "on the way", begins to reveal the possibilities of his nature for good or bad and for both at once. And only in the most pressing kinds of action, action that involves the ultimate risk and pushes him to the very limits, are the fullest possibilities revealed. It is action entered into by choice and thus one that affirms man's freedom. And it leads into suffering (1980, 47).

The choice made by the protagonist helps to expose the tragic character's virtues and errors. It is the hero's character that guides him, and his actions speak for him.

As Hodgson points out, in Greek tragedy this error was usually initiated by the gods or by fate, whereas in modern tragedy it is usually viewed as the individual's fault (158). This is one of the differences between Greek tragedy

and modern tragedies. The divine powers and fate are or seem to be more involved in the action of Greek tragedies and the decisions of the tragic protagonists. However, in the modern tragedies, the heroes either decide with their free will or they are forced by some extreme circumstances, which can be compared to fate.

This chapter is devoted to the actions and the tragic errors of the main characters in the six plays, and will analyse the role of fate and/or free will in their actions.

The theme of tragic mistakes caused either by free will or necessity has been a recurrent theme in Greek Tragedies. The protagonists who are trying to hold on to their values in conflicting situations usually commit a tragic mistake or an error of judgement.

### **3.1 Agamemnon**

The tragic error of Agamemnon, the victorious king, leads to his death. Although Agamemnon is on stage only for a short duration of the entire play, the chorus and his wife Clytemnestra inform the audience of his tragic errors.

Agamemnon's first misdeed is his decision to declare war on Troy. Agamemnon believes Helen's elopement should be revenged. He does not see it as a war, but more like revenge. When he returns from the war, he thanks the gods "who rendered me my vengeance over Priam's town" (AGA, 59). However, the chorus implies that the war was not really necessary for the sake of rescuing a woman like Helen, and that there will be bitter consequences of it. Thus, Agamemnon commits an error of judgement by pursuing this war that nobody thinks is plausible. No bloodshed is left without punishment, and as Agamemnon is the one who causes it, he will be punished by the gods as well:

So did great Zeus, guardians of etiquette,  
Send Atreus' sons hot against Paris,  
Starting for Greeks and for Trojans the struggle:  
Javelins a-splinter, knees in dust,  
All for the sake of a many-manned woman.  
No balm and no tears, no fire can burn  
The god's wrath away from a sacrifice spurned. (AGA, 33)

Even though Agamemnon and his brother have sailed to Troy thinking that this is Zeus' wish, there are no references to such a direct wish in the play except the chorus' ambiguous "But a god- was it Pan, Apollo or Zeus?-/ .../ Send in the fullness of time the Avenger" (AGA, 33). No matter which God it is, the bloodshed will still be punished. Artemis is against the violence that is going to happen in Troy, so she orders Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia. If Artemis' demand to sacrifice Iphigenia is not satisfied, she will not let the fleet sail. Agamemnon has to consider whether to sacrifice his daughter or not. Out of his responsibility as a leader, he decides to do so. The chorus describes Agamemnon's act as sacrilegious and impious. They also believe Agamemnon feels that as the leader of the fleet he has to proceed, and that "once he'd buckled his need to do it" (AGA, 38), Agamemnon was unmoved by his daughters pleads, which "Were nothing to the passion of her jury: / The military minded" Agamemnon (AGA, 39). Agamemnon really seems to believe that the sacrifice is an obligation. The former comment of the chorus on the futility of the war is applicable in this case, too. Therefore, Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter for a cause he believes to be right is his second tragic fault in the play.

Both of these fatal decisions that Agamemnon makes are not witnessed by the audience, the chorus recounts them:

Callously, he dealt the deathblow to his daughter;  
All for a war waged for a woman-  
An offering to the fleet (AGA, 39)

However, when Agamemnon appears on stage, it is to reveal his conceited character saying "Come victory, attend! / Befriend me to the end" (AGA, 60). Agamemnon has become a proud conqueror; his temptress is his own ambitions.

Thomson refers to the second stasimon which

draws a subtly elaborated parallel between Paris and Agamemnon. Emboldened by riches, Paris grew proud and so incurred the jealousy of the gods. The spirit of Persuasion or Temptation raised his hopes, made him reckless, and so incurred him to commit an overt act of insolence, leading directly to his fall (239).

The situation of Agamemnon recalls that of Paris. When Agamemnon victoriously arrives in his chariot, he has already betrayed his daughter and

his wife with the sacrifice; he has caused pain, suffering and death both to his own people and the Trojans. As Troy has been destroyed completely, lots of people have died. His own soldiers suffered during the war, many died in Troy and many others were lost in the sea. However, Agamemnon seems to disregard his mistakes, as he does not seem to be sorry or apologetic. Stewart describes him as an ambitious, proud and over-self-confident ruler who thinks that the war and the sufferings have had no effect on how his people see him (in Ferguson, 84). The chorus tries to warn him against possible enemies and acts of retaliation. Agamemnon responds to the chorus' warning:

How few there are whose natures feel no gall  
At a friend's prosperity!  
For envy settles like poison on the heart; (AGA, 60)

Agamemnon claims that he will be able to tell who envies him as a friend and who his enemies are. Kitto remarks that Agamemnon's reply indicates that he thinks the reason of envy is his great success, and that he is blinded by his pride and his vain glory (1956:22). Thinking only of his greatness and his victory, Agamemnon becomes guilty of hubris.

When Clytemnestra enters to “welcome” her husband, she is playing the role of a dutiful and faithful wife. Actually she is not speaking the truth. Clytemnestra has been plotting against Agamemnon to take the revenge of their sacrificed daughter: “This was a long premeditated struggle” (AGA, 84). She lies to Agamemnon and flatters him so that his suspicions are not aroused and she can achieve her aim. She calls Agamemnon “my lord” and “dear head”, and invites him to walk on tapestries “but not upon our common earth: / Not the foot, my king, that trod down Troy”, into the palace. (AGA, 62). Although the herald and the chorus consider her words to be “high flung”, it is actually Agamemnon's "monstrous egotism” that “prevents him from penetrating the insincerity of his wife, whose words of affection mask her bloody purpose. An unconscious hypocrite himself, he is fooled by a hypocrite” (Stewart, in Ferguson, 84). Clytemnestra makes use Agamemnon’s intoxication from his victory, and Agamemnon's self-centredness eventually aids his wife’s plans for him. He refuses Clytemnestra's seducing offer to walk on fine tapestries to enter his palace victoriously:

Respect me as a man not a god.  
I need no footmats and no fripperies to sound my fame.  
God's greatest gift is to keep us from our follies; (AGA, 63)

Agamemnon seems to be aware of who he really is as a human being and falsifies the accusations of certain critics who blame him of arrogance and hubris for identifying himself as a partner of the gods. A few exchanges later Clytemnestra coaxes him into threading on the tapestries. The argument she uses to convince him is that the king of Troy would have done the same: "Then don't allow mere fear of man to hinder you" (AGA, 63). Agamemnon is not ambitious and boastful enough to see himself as equal to the gods, but he is not going to be upgraded by the king of Troy, which is a clear indication of pride. He becomes the victim of his own arrogance. His decision to go into the house where he is killed is his last tragic mistake. Ferguson states that this last act of Agamemnon is symbolical, as it is the only offence or act of overt loftiness the audience witnesses on the stage (85).

At some point in the play, the chorus says, "It is the act of wickedness / Bears wickedness just like it (AGA, 57)". Agamemnon performs misdeed over misdeed, although he does not mean to be a villain, and all these mistakes lead him to his destruction, like a chain reaction.

In the definition of traditional Greek Tragedy, Agamemnon's errors seem to be god imposed and can be explained by fate. However, a closer look reveals that he has made all the fatal decisions on his own. Kitto states that the idea of war is his own, and he is autonomous (1956:71). Sacrificing his daughter is also an act of free will, as he was given the choice to cancel the war and save his daughter. Thus, although Agamemnon "puts on the yoke of necessity", he actually chooses freely (Rehm, 80).

### **3.2 Oedipus Rex**

Ferguson states that "Oedipus is an excellent subject for tragedy, because he is pre-eminently great and glorious without being pre-eminently just and virtuous, and because he falls through a fault but not a criminal fault" (194). The tragic hero of Sophocles' play seems to suffer from what has been determined by his fate even before he was born. Rehm reminds critics that Oedipus' tragic

flaw is not his murder of his own father and marrying his mother, but that “Oedipus errs through simple ignorance of the material facts of his birth” (110).

Oedipus’ insolence, excessive self-confidence and his impulsiveness precipitate his fall. Like Agamemnon, Oedipus’ overt self-conceit comes from his success when he defeated the Sphinx by guessing the answer to its riddle and saved Thebes. He reproaches Tiresias for not having guessed the answer, “But I, the Oedipus who stumbled here without a hint, could snuff her out / by human wit, not taking cues from birds” (OR, 37). When the people of Thebes declared him king and gave him the opportunity to marry the queen, his ambitious character has made him accept this offer. The chorus describes him as the man “who aimed so high! / Who hit life’s topmost prize- success!” (OR, 59). Oedipus wants to have power, and once he has it, he becomes self-centred and proud, just as Agamemnon had become so through his own triumph.

Oedipus reflects his ambitious and proud character throughout the play. In the beginning, he is portrayed as a responsible king who wants to save his city from the plague that haunts Thebes and become their hero once again. However, the way he carries out this research gives hints to his character. When the blind prophet Tiresias refuses to tell him what he knows, Oedipus reacts in such a way that he immediately reveals his need to be in control of the situation and have his way:

OEDIPUS: What, nothing?  
You miserable old man!  
You’d fire a stone to fury. Still insist?  
Your flinty heart set in hopeless stubbornness?  
TIRESIAS: My flinty heart! O, if you could only see what  
lurks in yours you would not chide me so.  
OEDIPUS: Hear that? What man alive, I ask, could stand such  
insults to our sovereignty and state? (OR, 35)

In this exchange, Oedipus is outraged because a blind beggar refuses to give him the answer he is waiting for. It also makes it obvious that he is a hot-tempered king, and will not let himself be fooled by anyone. When Tiresias tells him that he is the culprit of the crime, Oedipus’ reaction is: “Insolence! And dare you think you’re safe?” (OR, 35) If only Oedipus could have treated Tiresias in a civil manner, he would have arrived at the truth of what is ailing the city and the people much easily. However, once insulted, he does not listen to what the

prophet has to say and lays the guilt of the crime on Tiresias and Creon, his brother-in-law.

Oedipus has a very high opinion of himself, and in his conceit, he cannot see what the prophet is driving at. Similar to Agamemnon's response to the chorus' warning, Oedipus, too, begins to talk of envy and the possibility of Creon plotting against him:

Oh life so pinnacled on fame!  
What envy have you garnered to yourself?  
And for a kingship which a state put in my hands.  
all given, never asked. (OR, 36)

Oedipus thinks he has every right to the kingdom, and he is ready to punish anyone who is a threat to his authority. Thus, he arrogantly accuses Creon, of plotting against him as he did against the former king Laius to get hold of the crown saying, "You, the murderer so self-proved, the self-condemned filcher of my throne" (OR, 44) and argues with him. Rehm makes a sharp distinction between the two characters: Creon is "reasonable, cautious and well intentioned", compared to the excessive and impulsive king Oedipus (114). In the scene where Oedipus confronts Creon, the chorus warns him not to behave impulsively, but Oedipus replies, "Swift thinking must step to parry / Where swift treachery steps in to plot (OR, 42)". As well as being impulsive, Oedipus also believes he is right and disregards the elders' advice.

Oedipus' ambitious character is evident even at the end of the play, when he pleads Creon to let him embrace his children once more; he still tries to have things in his own way: "No, no, never! Don't take them from me" (OR, 68). Rehm points out that Oedipus' speech has the ring of "natural dominance"(121). Creon tells him to "Stop being master now- the mastery you had in life has meant so little" (OR, 68). Oedipus cannot totally get rid of his arrogance and egotism even after the tragic experience he has gone through.

When Oedipus is considered in terms of tragic errors, one tends to focus on his murder and incest, and defend them as being imposed by fate and the gods. It is true that these had already been determined to happen, and although Oedipus tried to stop them from happening, happened all the same. Oedipus' tragic error, his hubris, on the other hand, cannot be imposed from outside. Whatever

success he gained, Oedipus had the choice to remain modest. Thus, Oedipus, like Agamemnon, errs because of his character and with his free will.

### 3.3 Medea

Although the main character of Euripides' play is Medea, her husband Jason also faces a fall through his ambition. Therefore, both characters should be considered when analysing the tragic mistakes and the issue of pride in the play.

Kitto suggests that Medea is “no character compounded of good and bad, in whom what is bad tragically brings down in ruin what is good and we certainly cannot fear her as one of ourselves” (1939:191). What causes Medea to fall is her tragic mistake of murdering her children, Creon and his daughter because of her obsessive love for her husband, and because of her wounded self-esteem.

From the beginning of the play it is made obvious that Medea dares to go to the extreme if she believes it is necessary, such as killing her own brother, betraying her family and plotting against Pelias. The play begins with the speech of the nurse, who regretfully summarises what has happened to Medea:

Then my mistress Medea would never have sailed  
To the towers of Iolcus, her heart smitten with love  
For Jason. Nor would she have induced Pelias' daughters  
To kill their father, nor come here to live in Corinth  
(MEDEA, 3)

The nurse fears what is still to happen, now that Jason has left Medea and their children to marry the king's daughter. Knowing what Medea has done before, the nurse knows Medea's capabilities and her unwillingness to remain passive:

I'm afraid she's dreaming up some dreadful plan.  
She is dangerous. None who makes an enemy of her  
Will win an easy victory (MEDEA, 5)

The nurse' apprehension is justified and Medea immediately begins to plan how to take her revenge: “I have many paths to bring them death: / I do not know which first to try” (MEDEA, 25). Medea now regrets all her deeds committed for the sake of her love for Jason: “O my father and my country, which I lost, / When I foully murdered my brother!” (MEDEA, 11). Medea knows what she

has done was wrong and that she cannot go back to her father's country. She is now a woman without the support of her home-land or her family, and she is aware of the consequences of her position: "A foreigner must take special care to conform to the state" (MEDEA, 15). Having also been abandoned by Jason, she is totally isolated and left on her own: "where can I now turn?" (MEDEA, 33) she asks Jason, as she does not know how she can survive without the help of a family or friends.

Despite the fact that Medea regrets her acts which she now considers as mistakes, she has a passionate and ambitious soul, which gives her the courage to do certain things. Her extreme love for Jason, which is evident when she refers to him as "the man who was my whole life" (MEDEA, 15), urges her to take revenge on him. Her revenge is two fold: First, she is to destroy the Creon family, thus the city by killing the king and his lineage that is his daughter. Next, she is to make Jason suffer a personal pain with the deaths of his children and the woman who would have secured him a crown, which also leaves him without a lineage, or any future prospects. Although Medea is aware that murdering her children is an unholy crime, her motives override the pain and guilt the deed would bring. She can deal with the pain, "that I can endure" (MEDEA, 57). Just before committing the crime, she hesitates; but the thought of her enemies, "but I cannot endure / The mockery of my enemies" (MEDEA, 57), makes her mind up to proceed with the deed.

Although Medea seems to have her own excuse to kill her children, believing it is the right punishment for Jason, actually it is an act of pride, "O misery! O my stubborn pride! (MEDEA, 73). Jason has hurt Medea's pride, so she wants to retaliate and avenge herself. Her pride or hubris makes her murder her children, and it is another tragic mistake she commits. Like Oedipus, Medea acts through her rage and anger, and decides to act very quickly. Medea carries out her plans and destroys both her own and Jason's family.

Euripides is a more modern playwright, in the sense that he also presents the psychological make-up of his characters. In **Medea**, the main characters' feelings are portrayed quite openly. Medea is portrayed with her passion, rage and reasoning of infanticide.

Jason is also portrayed quite in detail. He is a man who thinks about

his status in society and he is ready to leave his family to secure that position for himself. Unlike Medea's passionate love and her pride, Jason's ambition is for power and status. Having had to leave his own city where he should have become king, Jason wants to become the ruler of Corinth now. He accepts to marry the king's daughter despite his existing marriage to Medea and their sons. Medea tells him that if they had no children this would have been more acceptable. Jason's aim is neither children nor undying love for the princess although he pretends that the union would also protect both Medea and their children:

Get this straight: it is not for any woman  
That I made this royal marriage. I've already said  
I did it to safeguard you, to father royal sons,  
Brothers to my children, a security for my house  
(MEDEA, 41)

A parallel can be drawn between Jason and Oedipus, as they are both ambitious characters who can do anything to achieve and protect their power and position. Oedipus has accepted to marry the queen to secure his place in Thebes, and Jason plans to do the same. His ambition is for wealth and status, whereas Medea's ambition is to preserve her dignity. As Kendigul expresses, the different kinds of ambition the couple have leads to their destruction (6).

What these characters set out to achieve is not activated by fate. They have free choices. Although the nurse's opening speech implies that it is fate that brought Jason and Medea together and caused Medea's all consuming love with dire consequences, what happens after this meeting is the characters' choices or mistakes. In spite of this, in the end, both Medea and Jason blame their fate for the way their lives turn out. Medea laments, "Mine is a hapless woman's fate" (MEDEA, 87) and Jason cries out "I am left to lament my fate" (MEDEA, 95). Their attitude reflects a more traditional view human beings have, as it is easy to condemn fate when people are suffering from mistakes they have made. This is another point where Euripides introduces some more psychological depth.

Agamemnon and Oedipus are powerful leaders who have high self-esteem, and their tragic mistake is hubris. Medea is also guilty of hubris, as she has too much pride, and kills her own children just to prevent people from humiliating her. Both Medea and Agamemnon, are guilty of infanticide. Agamemnon's

mistake seems to be less significant, as his decision has been influenced by fate: his position as a leader and Artemis' wish for a sacrifice, but he commits the deed out of his own will. Oedipus also seems to be a victim of his fate, or the curse of the gods, however, he has also made some deeds and decisions with his free will. Medea's murderous deeds are also totally her free choice. Thus, although in Greek tragedy it is usually assumed that the gods have control over the protagonists' actions, this does not seem to be the case in these three plays.

The protagonists of the modern tragedies also commit errors of judgement just like the protagonists of the Greek tragedies. In their decisions to act, free will is more determining than fate.

### **3.4 Equus**

In **Equus**, Dysart, the successful psychiatrist, has no major error to mark the beginning of his misfortune. Dysart's misfortune begins with his meeting Alan, whom he is asked to cure from a passion which does not fit in the norms of society: his extreme and destructive "passion" for his own religion.

In the beginning, Dysart is reluctant to accept Alan: "I can take no more patients at the moment. I can't even cope with the ones I have" (EQUUS, 19). Dysart does not explain his reason for the reluctance, but it can be his "professional menopause", which is already present. However, he is interested in the case and his responsibility makes him accept Alan. Starting the therapy, Dysart begins to envy Alan for his sublime passion and the creative force behind it. Dysart's duty is to make Alan a 'normal' human being, which means killing him spiritually: "passion, you see, can be destroyed by a doctor. It cannot be created" (EQUUS, 108). For Dysart, destroying Alan's driving force means killing his own buried passions as well.

Dysart has been experiencing the clash between his desired passionate life and the monotonous life he has to lead for a long time, but Alan makes him realise that "the doubts have been there for years, piling up steadily in this dreary place. It's only the extremity of this case that's made them active" (EQUUS, 18). Dysart is aware of his predicament and he has to make a choice between what he feels is the right thing to do, which is not to cure Alan, and the laws and

professional duty that urges him to cure Alan. This dilemma is similar to the one experienced by Agamemnon before he sets out for the Trojan war. The obligation is enforced by tradition and/or Gods in Greek Tragedy, In modern tragedies, it is the society or the laws. Dysart's failure is not only an "intellectual failure to grasp what is right, a failure ... of human insight amidst the confusion of life" (Lesky, 17), but a failure to do what he feels to be right as well.

The reversal of fortune activated by the hero in Greek tragedies finds its counterpart in modern tragedies, too. If Oedipus had been reluctant to question the death of Laius, he would not have experienced a reversal of fortune. In Dysart's case, the reluctance leads to a reversal of identity; in the end of the play whether Dysart or Alan is the patient is not clear: "I need –more desperately than my children need me- a way of seeing in the dark" (EQUUS, 109). He is a good example of modern man trapped by his responsibilities.

Dysart has free will, but lacks the initiative to use it. He loses his own dignity; by refusing to do what he believes to be right, he is committing a crime against man's freedom to choose the kind of life he desires to live. He sets on to cure Alan, and he knows his achievement "is more likely to make a ghost!" (EQUUS, 107). The "ghost" refers to both Alan and himself. They will both continue to lead their lives as the society wants them to, they will have neither passions nor energy. His weak psychological constitution leads him to an unhappy future in the shadow of his faulty decision.

### **3.5 View from the Bridge**

The major tragic error of Eddie Carbone is the subconscious passion he harbours for his niece Catherine. As such a relationship is forbidden by the society, Eddie cannot admit it even to himself, and throughout the play Eddie commits several mistakes and he tries to use the family conventions as excuses for his behaviour.

Everything Eddie does is to get rid of Rodolpho, whom he sees as a rival because he is flirting Catherine. Since Eddie is not aware of his desire of Catherine on the conscious level, this rivalry is not made obvious verbally, but can be understood from Eddie's actions. Eddie tries to get the support of his wife, Beatrice, to take out Rodolpho from Catherine's life; but she likes Rodolpho

and thinks it is better for Cathy and him to be together:

BEATRICE: He's a nice kid, what do you want from him?

EDDIE: That's a nice kid? He gives me the heeby-jeebies.

(VIEW, 34).

Eddie does not like Rodolpho, so he is determined to separate the couple, hiding behind the excuse of protecting his niece. His wife's warnings are not effective enough to restrain him. As Abbotson writes, "once he sets himself on a chosen course, his character leads him to destruction" (70).

Eddie begins this "course" by degrading Rodolpho verbally whenever he gets the chance. When he talks to his wife, he refers to Rodolpho as "He's like a weird" (VIEW, 35) and claims that he looks like a "chorus girl" with his blond hair, which would be the ultimate insult for, especially, a Mediterranean man. Eddie believes that Rodolpho is flirting Catherine because he wants to become an American citizen through marrying her. An exchange between Beatrice and Rodolpho the first night the two immigrants had arrived arised Eddies' suspicions and serves as evidence. When Beatrice asked if Rodolpho wants to stay in America, he had answered: "Me? Yes, for ever! Me, I want to be an American" (VIEW, 30). This comment increases Eddie's suspicions about Rodolpho's interior motives in courting Catherine.

When his threats and verbal abuse do not work, Eddie makes a more severe mistake, by kissing both his niece and Rodolpho on the mouth. He explains why he did that as "To show her what he is! So she would see, once and for all!" (VIEW, 66). Eddie is trying to prove that Rodolpho is a homosexual, and that he is not really interested in Cathy but in securing American citizenship. The kiss also aims to prove to Cathy that he is not 'manly' enough to protect her. Although Catherine is shocked, she does not react the way Eddie has hoped for. On the contrary, she has no intention of leaving Rodolpho; she confronts Eddie saying, "I'm going with him" (VIEW, 65), and decides to marry Rodolpho as soon as possible. Eddie, now desperate to stop the marriage, makes another error of judgement, and he informs the Immigration Office that Rodolpho and Marco are illegal immigrants.

In the beginning of the play, Eddie told his family the story of a neighbour son who had informed on his illegal relatives, and had become an outcast.

Eddie knows the consequence of such an act: “You’ll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How’s he gonna show his face?” (VIEW, 24). Eddie’s remark shows both the cultural and social values as well as the significance of such a deed. Unfortunately, Eddie makes the same mistake and puts himself into the same situation. He is aware that he will also be punished for his wrongdoing, become an outcast and lose everything he has got. However, he is so obsessed by the idea of separating Rodolpho and Catherine that he does not consider the results of his actions. Eddie consults Alfieri, the lawyer a few times, and is told that there is nothing he can do. Alfieri advises him not to keep holding on to Catherine: “You did your job, now it’s her life; wish her luck, and let her go (VIEW, 48). The last time Eddie visits Alfieri is after kissing Rodolpho and learning that the couple will get married soon. In that visit, Alfieri stresses that: “Morally and legally, you have no rights, you cannot stop it; she is a free agent” (VIEW, 66). Eddie is unable to comprehend this fact. He is under the influence of such overwhelming emotions that no logical argument can penetrate him. Thus, against Alfieri’s advice, Eddie lets the Immigration Office know about Rodolpho and Marco, and the same night the officers come and arrest the brothers. Marco understands this is Eddie’s deed, and lets everyone know saying “That one! I accuse that one!” (VIEW, 77). Eddie now faces a fate similar to the neighbour’s child. In a neighbourhood where pride and honour are so important, Eddie has lost his honour both by his own deed and Marco’s spitting into his face.

Eddie's last error is his unwillingness to make peace with Rodolpho and Marco. Eddie sends a threatening message to Marco through Rodolpho: "I want my name- and you can run tell him, kid, that he's gonna give it back to me in front of this neighbourhood, or we have it out" (VIEW, 82). Eddie feels Marco has no right to treat him like a traitor, regardless of the conflict between him and Rodolpho, since he was the one to shelter the brothers in America. Eddie wants back the pride and dignity he has lost by informing against the two men. He is less concerned with having harmed them than losing face in the neighbourhood. The only amicable way to sort this out is to apologise to each other; but Eddie chooses to fight it out, which ends up in his death.

Despite his tragic flaws that have dire consequences, Eddie cannot be

classified as an evil man who does terrible deeds. He is a family man until his secret passion for Cathy makes him disregard his duties to his wife and to his niece. He accepts to have his wife's relatives over and help them earn a living, too. Eddie is the product of his male-dominant background, and he does not want his dominance to be threatened. Epstein claims that

Eddie is a tragic figure, Miller clearly feels, because in the intransigence of his actions, there is an implicit fidelity to the self, integrity to one's own beliefs no matter how perverse they may be. However wrong they may have been, and Alfieri is not unmindful of Eddie's tragic deed, Eddie nonetheless pursues what he regards the proper course of action (in Martine, 115).

Although the things he has done are wrong, Eddie had to do them to recover his sense of self and his dignity as a man, both of which are shattered in the end of the play. Eddie faces constant accusations from both his wife and Alfieri on the nature of his love for his niece, which he rejects fiercely. However, deep inside, he must have realised it or at least he must have some doubts. Miller suggests that "Eddie exemplifies the wondrous and humane fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is to sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided, of right, dignity and justice" (in Epstein, 116).

Another point to consider is what led Eddie to commit these errors and to prepare his downfall. Eddie's fate has placed him in his social milieu in New York, with his niece Cathy and his illegal relatives. If he was not in that situation, or if his niece was not living with them, or if he lived in a society which has looser social norms, Eddie might not have lived the same ordeal. However, Miller suggests, "people's characters have the biggest influence in determining their fate" (in Abbotson, 71). Falling in love with Cathy is not imposed by his fate, it is a subconscious desire he has. Despite being ruled by his subconscious, everything he does in the play, such as despising Rodolpho, trying to separate him and Cathy, and informing on Marco and Rodolpho, is his own decision, and his mistakes stem from his own character. Bigsby claims that Eddie is ruled by his subconscious desires and he is a psychopathologic case, who cannot assume responsibility for his actions (202). Although it is Eddie's obsessive desire that leads him to do the mistakes he does, the actions are not directly caused by the obsession; it is Eddie himself that chooses his course of action. Thus,

Eddie is responsible for his end, he is the one to determine his own fate through his deeds.

### 3.6 Long Day's Journey into Night

In O'Neill's play, James Tyrone, is accused of having caused suffering for the whole family. He had a poor childhood, so he has been overly ambitious about money, he has given more importance to his acting career and saving money rather than providing affection and financial comfort for his wife and children. His love of money still dominates him, and this is one of the accusations in the play:

TYRONE: There's nothing like the first after-breakfast cigar, if it's a good one, and this new lot have the right mellow favour. They're a great bargain, too. I got them dead cheap. It was McGuire who put me on to them (JOURNEY, 15)

Even in buying simple items like cigars, he looks out for the cheapest available. However, in the next part, his wife makes it clear that he would spend his money for bigger items, if he believes they will be profitable, such as property that is not of any use to the family. When the telephone rings, Mary tells her sons:

It must be McGuire. He must have another piece of property on his list that no one would think of buying except your father. It doesn't matter anymore, but it's always seemed to me your father could afford to keep on buying property but never to give me a home (JOURNEY, 73).

James Tyrone likes money and profit. Later in the play, his wife and his sons accuse him of two greater mistakes he has made due to his frugality. Even a serious event like Edmund's illness is treated in an off-handed manner. His elder son Jamie accuses James of sending Edmund to a cheap doctor when he was ill:

TYRONE: What's the matter with Hardy? He's always been our doctor.

JAMIE: Everything's the matter with him! Even in Thicketburg he's rated third class! He's a cheap old quack!

TYRONE: That's right! Run him down! Run down everybody! Everyone is fake for you!

JAMIE: *Contemptuously*. Hardy only charges a dollar. That's what makes you think he's a fine doctor! (JOURNEY, 30)

This exchange exemplifies both James Tyrone's errors of judgement

and the ongoing conflict between father and son. The same issue is raised soon after this discussion. This time, Jamie accuses his father of calling a cheap doctor when his mother delivered Edmund and was sick:

TYRONE: You damned fool! No one was to blame.

JAMIE: The bastard of a doctor was! From what Mama's said, he was another cheap quack like Hardy! You wouldn't pay for a first-rate-

TYRONE: That's a lie! *Furiously*. So I'm to blame! That's what you're driving at, is it? (JOURNEY, 39)

Tyrone's wife, Mary, gives her account of James Tyrone's mistakes to her sons, such as not providing her with a real home and a social atmosphere because he did not want to spend his money:

I've never felt it was my home. It was wrong from the start. Everything was done in the cheapest way. Your father would never spend the money to make it right. ...All he likes is to hobnob with men at the Club or in a barroom. (JOURNEY, 44)

Mary also complains about how he used to leave her alone in the cheap hotel rooms where they were living because they were usually on tour. Mary longingly refers back to her days in the Convent and in her father's house as beautiful days: "You forget I know from experience what a home is like. I gave up one to marry you- my father's home" (JOURNEY, 72). Her speeches imply that she misses those days and sometimes regrets having married James Tyrone, despite her love for him. However, she does not admit openly that marrying James Tyrone was a mistake.

Although her use of drugs seems to haze her view, Mary is one of the characters who is aware of everyone's mistakes, including her own. Mary carries the burden of the death of their second baby, Eugene. She had left the baby with her parents because she wanted to travel with James, but the baby died. She has resented it ever since: "I should have insisted on staying with Eugene" (JOURNEY, 88). She promised herself not to have another baby: "I swore after Eugene died I would never have another baby. I was to blame for his death" (JOURNEY, 87) so Mary feels much worse about giving birth to Edmund after this event. She feels it was a mistake, because they never had a home to raise their children properly: "children should have homes to be born in, if they are to be good children" (JOURNEY, 88).

Mary is aware of her sons' characters and their flaws. Both Jamie and Edmund are alcoholics, and Jamie is involved with prostitutes. Mary knows that it is Tyrone's and her mistake that the boys have not had the chance to associate with decent people. She feels that if the boys had been able to have a proper home and family, they would have become decent and respectable men in the society: "You'd never have disgraced yourselves as you have, so that no respectable parents will let their daughters be seen with you" (JOURNEY, 44).

The elder son Jamie has made two major errors in his life. First of all, he caused the death of his baby brother Eugene. When he was a small child he got measles. The baby contracted it from him and died. Mary says, "I've always believed Jamie did it on purpose. He was jealous of the baby" (JOURNEY, 87). The incident contains the psychology of both a small child's jealousy of a new baby, and the mother's trying to put the blame on someone. Jamie's other tragic error has been deliberately setting a bad example for his brother Edmund, which he confesses it at the end of the play: "I've been a rotten bad influence. And the worst of it is, I did it on purpose" (JOURNEY, 165). These two flaws are quite important and even fatal, as one has caused the death of one brother, and the second has almost done the same. Edmund is suffering of consumption, and his situation, though not clear, could be fatal added with his alcoholism. Jamie is one of the reasons why Edmund drinks so much, which is the reason for his ill health.

Mary also criticises Jamie for being disrespectful and contemptuous towards his father: "It's you who should have more respect! Stop sneering at your father!" (JOURNEY, 60). However, these are all ways that Jamie uses to revenge the drug abuse of his mother, which he has witnessed since he was a child.

Three of the Tyrones have committed tragic errors in their lives. The final point to consider is whether these tragic mistakes were imposed on the characters by fate or whether they are outcomes of free will. For each member of the family, there is some element of fate. For example, for Tyrone, his childhood poverty has led him to become a 'miser', as his sons call him. However, he has made his own decisions on never having a proper house, staying in cheap hotels and getting cheap doctors. Meeting Tyrone and falling in love with him has been Mary's fate, but marrying him, going on trips with him and having children

have been consequences of her own free will. Jamie has been affected negatively by his mother's health problems, but becoming an alcoholic and intentionally setting a bad example for Edmund have been his own choices. Thus, although fate plays some role in a modern tragedy, the main cause for tragic errors is mostly free will and the choices of the tragic characters. In Falk's words, the characters' destruction is their own responsibility (in Bloom, 19).

However, the fact that the family has held together for many years, and has not fallen apart deserves respect and admiration. "The love and loyalty that, for all the bickering, keep them from disintegration, as individuals and as a family" (Sewall, 163) makes the Tyrone family a courageous collective tragic hero.

All the protagonists of the modern tragedies are driven to commit tragic mistakes. Dysart makes an error of judgement, and decides he is too weak to change his life according to his beliefs, and bends to the norms of the society. The cost of this decision is a phantom-like life in the future. His behaviour makes him seem less a tragic hero than he seems, but his awareness and pain still qualify him as a modern tragic hero.

Dysart's lack of passion is compensated for in Eddie's character. Eddie so passionately holds to his beliefs that he is ready to sacrifice everything he has, including his reputation in the small Italian society. His error of judgement is not considering the consequences of his behaviour. His unawareness makes him different from the traditional tragic character. He understands very little of what is happening to him, so breaks the rule of "anagnorisis" of Greek tragedy. Eagleton argues that "such self-blindness"; not meaning the protagonists' lack of vision from the start, but an inability to recognise the real state of events and to stick to their initial values; "deepens rather than dilutes the tragedy" (99).

James Tyrone commits hubris, he was too sure of himself in the past and has acted in a selfish way in the past by dragging Mary with him on tours, neglecting their children and the concept of a "home". Tyrone has also been overtly ambitious. He gives too much importance to money and wants to be wealthy. He has even ruined his acting career, in which he believes he could be very successful too.

For all three protagonists, one aspect of modern tragedy differentiates

them from their Greek counterparts: the impact of their psychological make-up rather than their fates. Modern tragedy gives more weight to psychological depth of characters. Although Dysart, Eddie and Tyrone make their decisions and mistakes on their own, they are all influenced by their past which has formed their personalities. Dysart is longing for a driving force he does not have, and his inability leads him to pain. Eddie is shaped by the social norms that require him to look after his family and solidarity and the norms that prohibit incest, which come into conflict with his nature.

**Long Day's Journey into Night** is one of the most psychologically developed plays. The behaviour of the family members can all be explained through their psychology. James Tyrone is shaped by his childhood poverty, and cannot get rid of his financial fears. Mary is under the pressure of her past ideals such as becoming a nun or a concert pianist, having a decent house and of the past guilt of losing her baby. Her drug addiction which she resents also causes her distress and can be seen as a retreat from her psychological problems. Jamie also feels guilt for causing the death of his baby brother though possibly unconsciously and being a bad example for Edmund.

However, the characters in the three plays are not forced to act by their obsessions unconsciously. Their decisions and errors are all acts of free will. That they are unable to harness their psychological problems is innate in their make-ups.

## CHAPTER 4

### PATHEI MATHOS: TRAGIC EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING THROUGH SUFFERING

In tragedies, the tragic experience of the protagonist begins after he/she commits a tragic mistake, which involves pain, suffering and most important, the courage to fight against his destiny. The mark of the tragic hero is to achieve an understanding of this agony and learn from it.

The essence of most tragic plays is the pain and suffering undergone by the characters. Although this chapter is placed after the previous chapter, it does not imply that suffering begins only after hamartia. Pain and suffering lie under the cause for action, in the decision to act, and after the tragic error as well. The tragic hero might be in pain when he decides to do something, to act. However, after the decision and the deed itself, some heroes feel even worse pain, which is incorporated into the realisation of the consequences of their actions.

Sewall argues that, the mark of the tragic figure is his being caught between the urge to act and the knowledge that his decided course of action will cause suffering and pain (47). According to him, Clytemnestra and Medea who are both murderesses would not be considered as heroic in the romantic and moral sense; however, in the tragic sense they are heroic because they are able to face the consequences and suffer for their crimes (47-8).

Thus, tragic figures are not only people who suffer for their actions, they also have the courage to proceed and do what they believe is right. Miller describes a tragic figure as a “brave spirit who cannot settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself to the end” (in Draper, 34). The tragic figure knows the consequences of his actions and is ready to face them to restore his dignity and self-respect. Even the suffering the tragic hero goes through is heroic and dignified. The tragic heroes do not wail like ordinary people, and they show

how to suffer mightily in a brave and honourable way.

The tragic hero is supposed to gain wisdom through suffering: “The agony of tragic heroes in the Greek plays lead to some kind of understanding, whether of their own actions or of the laws that the gods impose on them” (Zimmerman, 40). If some learning is possible through pain, then it becomes more dignified. In Zimmerman’s words, Zeus enforces the doctrine of “learning by suffering”, *pathei mathos*, to human beings so that they can come to an understanding of life (40).

This chapter is allocated to the analysis of how the characters in the plays under discussion suffer, how courageous they are in facing their burden of pain and whether they learn through their sufferings.

#### **4.1 Agamemnon**

In **Agamemnon**, suffering and courage are interwoven. Although the tragic hero seems to be Agamemnon, it would not be fair to focus only on him and ignore the two female characters, Clytemnestra and Cassandra, who go through considerable agony as well.

To begin with, Agamemnon’s major acts in the play, sacrificing his daughter and sacking Troy are both actions that involve both suffering and bravery. Agamemnon is brave enough to murder his own daughter, but at the same time he suffers as a father, especially before he determines to commit the act:

Sever my child- my palace pearl?  
Bloody my hands in that virgin flood?  
A father’s hands at the altar side? (AGA, 38)

Although Agamemnon seems to regret his duty of sacrificing his daughter, he completes his task, and does not refer to this incident again. He seems to have suppressed the pain of having lost his child.

Another kind of suffering in the play is physical. The audience is familiarised with the physical difficulties of the army through the herald’s speech: “What was there not to complain about? / And once we landed – more abominations still” (AGA, 50). Agamemnon’s leadership must have provided him the urge to carry on. Agamemnon must have faced some physical

suffering, but as he has won the war, there can be no learning point from these pains.

Whether Agamemnon had any mental suffering during the war is not mentioned. Agamemnon was eventually resigned as he thought that the war was ordained by Zeus, so it was just. Agamemnon arrives home with a clear conscience, not thinking he has done any wrong. Even the fact that he has brought in Cassandra, a concubine from the war, does not seem to cause any moral questions for him, as he asks Clytemnestra to “show some kindness to this foreign girl and take her in” (AGA, 64). He thinks everything he has done has a justification. Even Cassandra is the “prize of an empire, present of an army” (AGA, 64).

Agamemnon does not seem to notice Clytemnestra’s hypocrisy; he is blind to it. Only in Agamemnon’s very final words before he dies a hint at a deeper understanding “O-oh! I am hit ... mortally hit... within” (AGA, 82). Hit refers to Clytemnestra’s stabs and is easy to account for. However, “within” is a strange word to utter at one’s death. Does he mean he is hit inside the palace, or does he mean Clytemnestra has pushed the knife inside his body? This word seems to have a more symbolical meaning, which is Agamemnon’s realisation of his wife’s treachery and maybe of his own guilty actions as well.

Clytemnestra also has been suffering since Agamemnon sacrificed their daughter: “Yet he’s the man who made a victim .../ Of his own daughter –dear lamb of my womb-” (AGA, 86). Clytemnestra’s dignity as a mother has been threatened and she has to take her revenge. Her dignity is hurt even more when Agamemnon brought Cassandra home as a war price: “The swan who warbled out her swansong, his beloved,/ Leading such a dainty morsel to my bed” (AGA, 87). She believes Agamemnon has no right to treat her like this, and he has to be punished. Thus, she plots with her lover Aegisthus to kill Agamemnon. Aegisthus claims it was his plan: “This man stretched out./ I was the one who sewed this murder up” (AGA, 94). However, this act that needs great courage was performed by Clytemnestra who was trying to restore her dignity and avenge herself. The deed needs courage, as no one, especially Agamemnon should realise her plan. Also she knows that killing someone in the family will bring punishment and suffering; so in spite of other repercussions her act would

bring, she is brave enough to go on. Clytemnestra's willingness to act shows her courage. Although she is portrayed as a cold-blooded killer and a dominant character, Clytemnestra is doing what she believes must be done.

Ferguson states that by murdering Agamemnon, Clytemnestra reveals that she has not learnt from Agamemnon's mistakes and the results of his violence, but commits the same mistake (1972: 79). However, at the end of the play, Clytemnestra is reminded that "Zeus on his throne, the Abider, is bidding / By the law that the criminal suffers" (AGA, 93). Clytemnestra seems to realise the truth and her next words are

I in consequence only too willingly  
Swear a pact with the house a pact  
To let things lie, hard though it be (AGA, 93).

Clytemnestra wants to break the vicious cycle, and remove the curse of the house. Although her wish is not to be realised, she has achieved some understanding, and for the first time might begin to fear that just as Agamemnon fought the war for Zeus but was punished for his crime, she will also be punished for being the tool of Dike. Kitto points out the similarity between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra: "A worse crime than Agamemnon's avenges what Agamemnon did; the second instrument of Dike is guiltier far than the first" (1956, 37).

At the very end of the play, when the chorus challenges Aegisthus and the tension mounts, Clytemnestra tries to calm the men down saying,

Let us work no further evil:  
Even these are far too many,  
Far too bitter this a harvest;  
Surely cause enough for sorrow.  
Let us not be spilling blood (AGA, 98)

Clytemnestra has learnt her lesson, but a new kind of suffering awaits her because what she has done cannot be undone.

The last character to be dealt with is Cassandra, who remains silently in Agamemnon's chariot until the chorus gets her to speak up. When she speaks, it is to tell them about her suffering and misery. When Agamemnon captured her, she had already been suffering because she had previously flirted with Apollo and later refused him. Her first words in the play imply her plight: Apollo!

Apollo! Guiding god... oh me to death!" (AGA, 69). Cassandra has to suffer, as she has also committed a tragic error by refusing Apollo and offending him: "Since that mistake, no one will believe a thing I say" (AGA, 75). This is Cassandra's misery. Although she has the gift of prophecy and can foretell events, even the fall of Troy, no one has believed her and she has witnessed the destruction of her city. Cassandra suffers even more than Agamemnon and Clytemnestra because through her gift of prophecy, she knows that she is going to her death by following Agamemnon: "So, then I go/ To sing the dirge of my own demise" (AGA, 81). Cassandra can foresee Clytemnestra's plan and understands that it involves her as well. She is more aware of the consequences of events, such as her deceiving Apollo and Agamemnon betraying his wife, than Agamemnon and Clytemnestra who cannot fathom the consequences of their actions.

The important point to consider is the fact that amidst all this agony, characters do not blame each other or use their own past behaviours as excuses. Kitto remarks that Cassandra blames neither Agamemnon nor Clytemnestra, who lead her to her death (1956: 29). Cassandra faces her destiny and death with dignity.

CA: Strangers, where there's no escape, postponement is no profit.  
OLD MAN: Yet honor lasts right to the very end.  
CA: This day has come, and little should I gain by flight.  
ANOTHER: Oh, you are brave: a most undaunted soul! (AGA, 80)

Cassandra is not suffering only for her imminent end; she has already suffered due to Apollo's rape, and her obligation to marry Agamemnon. In fact, she knows Clytemnestra is going to kill her just because Agamemnon has chosen her and brought her as a second wife: "So unblestly you brought me here: / For what? / Only to die; conjoined in death" (AGA, 72). She also feels agony as she can see into the history and future of Agamemnon's house:

Oh the pain! The pain!  
Truth comes racking again.  
That overture to prophecy:  
It spins me round and turns my head (AGA, 76).

Similarly, Clytemnestra does not openly blame Agamemnon for her grief.

Thus they exemplify the anguish, courage and stoic suffering of tragic characters in facing their fates.

All three characters suffer in their own way, even though the degrees of their suffering might be different. Agamemnon seems to have suffered the least, as he thinks he is only performing his duty for his family and his country through the Trojan expedition and the sacrifice of his daughter. Clytemnestra has suffered the loss of her daughter, and in this play she is quite unaware of the agonies she will go through as a result of taking the revenge of her daughter. Cassandra seems to have suffered more than the couple, in her experiences with Apollo, the fall of Troy, Agamemnon and in her prophecies of future events. However, her learning is greatly helped by her ability to foresee the future. So the knowledge she has is given to her rather than her acquiring it.

In Agamemnon, the source of suffering and learning is the gods. In the first mention, it is Zeus:

Brought human beings on the road of wisdom  
By setting his firm law:  
Through suffering, learning!  
At the heart's gate, even in sleep,  
Agony of remembered pain  
Falls drop by drop, and even to the unwilling  
Come wisdom and restraint (AGA, 37)

It is Zeus who sends Agamemnon off to war to avenge Helen's treachery, and this war causes suffering for Agamemnon's house, the Greeks and the Trojans alike. It is Artemis who asks for the sacrifice before the expedition and caused agony to Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. It is Apollo that causes the wrath of Cassandra and finally it is Zeus again that leads Clytemnestra to avenge her daughter and the Trojan war victims by murdering Agamemnon.

In the end, all three characters are pushed into some wisdom through their painful experiences which serve as schooling. Although there seems to be no direct learning in **Agamemnon**, Herrington suggests that in the Oresteia Trilogy, a larger extent of learning through the sufferings of a whole family is achieved (181).

## 4.2 Oedipus Rex

Although Oedipus seems to be a very self-confident and strong character, his life has been full of suffering. The main reason for this suffering is Oedipus' doubts about his real parenthood and a curse-like oracle:

Messenger: This fear that bars you from your home-  
Oedipus: Ay, that. The word of Phoebus may yet be true for me.  
Messenger: That story of pollution through your parents?  
Oedipus: Ay, that sir; that, is my ever-present torment. (OR, 53)

This exchange exemplifies how much pain and insecurity is in Oedipus' life, despite his powerful status as a king.

In the beginning of the play, Oedipus is experiencing sorrow: as the king, he has to help the Thebans once more, and solve one more riddle to save the city from the plague. This suffering is more of a mental nature, although he identifies himself with his people's pain, his misery is related more to his ego. He wants to accomplish a victory similar to his previous success with the sphinx. This is quite important for a character of so much self-esteem like Oedipus, and is a real torment for him, not being able to resolve the problem.

In his encounters with Tiresias, Oedipus' anxiety to find out the truth about the murderer of the previous king and rescue his city from plague is obvious:

We look to you. To help his fellow-men  
With all his power is man's most noble work  
...  
By the gods! If you know, do not refuse to speak!  
We all beseech you; we are all your suppliants" (OR, 34).

Oedipus seems to be in anguish but he does not grumble, moan or howl. Instead, he tries to force the truth out of the people he talks to. When he talks to Tiresias, his despair pushes him to verbal and almost physical aggression. He even accuses Tiresias of plotting against him.

Oedipus' doubts about his real parentage and the curse-like oracle about his parents have caused him distress all through his life:

Messenger: Well, you've fled from home because of this?  
Oedipus: Yes; and fear Apollo may prove right.  
Messenger: And you be fouled by what your parents are?  
Oedipus: Yes, old man, it's that. I'm always haunted by that dread. (OR, 62)

When the messenger tries to help Oedipus over this problem by revealing his true parents, Jocasta goes through the worst agony begs him, "Doomed man!/ O never live to learn the truth!"; then and she leaves Oedipus saying, "O lost and damned! This is my last and only word to you" (OR, 55). Oedipus, on the other hand, is adamant: "Let all come out, / However vile... I ... will know who I am" (OR, 55).

Oedipus is destroyed, as the major source of his distress and torture has come out, and he has not been aware that all through this search, he had actually been fighting against his destiny:

Alas! All out! All known, no more concealment!  
O light! May I never look on you again,  
Revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting  
Sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding of blood (OR, 58).

When he discovers that he is the man he had been searching, Oedipus is shocked, and his first reaction is of excruciating grief. Then there is a great relief of having found the truth.

Jocasta hangs herself and dies. Oedipus, finding her dead, lets out "heart-rendering groans" and blinds himself with her golden brooches, so that "he should see no longer his shame, his guilt (OR, 61). This self-punishment is remarkable because it echoes the earlier conflict between Oedipus and the blind prophet Tiresias, in which Oedipus claimed he knows better because he has eyesight. Oedipus has been proven wrong, he could not "see" the truth although he had eyes; he was mentally blind. By literally blinding himself, he exposes his anger for his useless sight and completes his blindness physically.

He is terrified and believes himself in hell: "Oh and again/ That piercing pain/ Torture in the flesh and in the soul's dark memory" (OR, 62). Oedipus is in physical and spiritual pain. Physical because he has lost his eyes, and spiritual because he has lost his wife, his mother, his sense of self and dignity as well. He has committed the crimes he has feared most. The pain of what he did to his father, who was a stranger to him, is secondary to the pain of having shared a life with his mother; what is more, there are living proofs of that union.

Even though Oedipus seems lost under his affliction and burden, he still has his dignity, and he says "On no man else / But on me alone is the

scourge of my punishment” (OR, 64). Oedipus, as a tragic hero, has the courage to bear his guilt and suffering as a dignified man even in the worst situation. However, his spiritual torment will cause him to suffer all through the rest of his life.

As Rehm suggests, Oedipus’ story is of “a man of intellect, whose rational gaze saw through the riddle of the Sphinx, gradually comes to know how flawed his vision and understanding have been” (110).

The cause of Oedipus’ sufferings is Apollo, as Oedipus also understands at the end of the play “Apollo, friends, Apollo/ Has laid this agony upon me / Not by his hand; I did it” (OR, 62). Oedipus is also aware of his part in the realisation of the curse. However, Oedipus does not know why he had to suffer. In Zimmerman’s words,

The gods are too distant, too great, and too powerful to be understood by mortals, who therefore can see no meaning in their suffering. The divine lies beyond the horizon of human understanding, although the divine will and a kind of knowledge of the divine have been made known to mortals through oracular utterances and the revelations of seers (75).

Oedipus may not be able to understand the God’s motives for making him suffer as such. However, he has learned his lesson; that he has behaved in a wrong way and has been too ambitious in life, and regrets his past behaviour towards Creon, realising his insolence:

What can I say to him? A plea of mine  
Can now just have any justice in his eyes,  
Whom I, as now is seen, have wronged so utterly? (OR, 65)

Thus, Oedipus shows that has been able to learn through his sufferings, and that he has become aware of his own flaws, such as being quick minded, stubborn and judgmental.

Oedipus learns to accept his fate humbly: "Be it so" (OR, 66). His concern now is for his children: "I think of your sorrowful life in the days to come, / When you must face the world" (OR, 67). The arrogant man is replaced by a caring father who entrusts his children to Creon. Oedipus also learns to obey, obey Creon to leave his children behind and accept banishment.

### 4.3 Medea

Medea is a strong character who suffers without flinching throughout the play, just as Oedipus, and in the end shows extraordinary endurance to suffering with dignity. The first reason for her deep-rooted distress is her past mistakes: betraying her family and leaving her country. Being in a foreign country where she has no family to turn to increases her pain now that Jason, for whose sake she has lost her family and country, has deceived and left her.

Being deceived by Jason is the paramount cause for her anguish. Jason's ambitious motives of securing a kingship for himself make it more difficult for Medea to accept his betrayal but what is absolutely unforgivable is the fact that Jason betrays the mother of his children:

And you, foulest of men,  
Have betrayed me. You have gotten another woman,  
When I have borne you sons. If you had no children,  
This lusting for her might be forgiven (MEDEA, 33)

When Creon asks Medea and her children to leave the city, her suffering is intensified even more; this is one more insult to her self-esteem and one more rejection. She cannot go back to her own country, and she cannot go to other cities either because she does not know anyone in the country; and she also has got enemies because she has induced king Pelias' daughters to poison him, an action which they regret and hate Medea for. The chorus points out her predicament: "A stateless refugee / Dragging out an intolerable life / In desperate helplessness" is "The most pitiful of all griefs; / Death is better" (MEDEA, 45)

Medea's real agony begins with her decision to murder her own children to take her revenge on Jason: "Why should I try to hurt their father by making them suffer, / And suffer twice as much myself?" (MEDEA, 73). Similar to Agamemnon's and Clytemnestra's dilemmas, the decision to kill someone from the same blood needs considerable courage. Medea proves this courage by carrying out her plan. She knows that she will feel the curse and agony of this act all her life when she tells her children: "Parted from you / I shall lead a grim and painful life" (MEDEA, 73). However, this is the only way she thinks she can restore her dignity, as she explains to the Chorus when they advise her not to murder her children:

Medea: There is no other way. I understand you saying

this, but you have not suffered as I have.  
Chorus: But can you bring yourself to kill your own sons,  
madam?  
Medea: It is the way to hurt my husband most (MEDEA, 57).

In her final encounter with Jason, he tells Medea, "You suffer too. You share my pain" (MEDEA, 95). However, according to Medea, she has restored her dignity, taken revenge on Jason's mockery of herself:

I wasn't going to let you show dishonour to my bed  
And live a life of pleasure, mocking me-  
...  
I've penetrated to your heart  
As you deserve! (MEDEA, 95)

The focus is not only the suffering of Medea, but the suffering she causes to the others "That she suffers herself is a great and no doubt a necessary part of the drama, but it is not the point of the tragedy" (Kitto, 196). The tragedy is the magnitude of her passion and the destruction it leads to.

The ending of **Medea** is quite different from the ending of **Oedipus Rex**. Oedipus learns to accept the past and the uncertain future; he learns humility. Medea is suffering for her lost love and her dead sons, however, she has not learned to accept her wrongdoing, to repent or to be humble. In fact, she feels quite glorious in the end. Ferguson states that Euripides "does not now seek our sympathy for Medea's suffering, only our fear at the power of her love" (262)- not only her love, but her hatred and courage as well.

Medea differs from Oedipus in that there seems to be no real learning point in the end. In the beginning of the play, when Medea laments her past deeds to defend Jason, she seems to have come up with a lesson from them. However, in the end, she murders her own children for the sake of making Jason suffer. Thus, Medea has not really learned her lesson well, and suffering just leads her to commit more crimes.

In conclusion, although the protagonists of the Greek tragedies suffer a great deal, they do not reveal it in the same way. Agamemnon and Medea are proud. They do not want to expose their weaknesses to their enemies, so they express their agony less. Compared to them, Oedipus shows his suffering more openly. Blinding himself is an overt illustration of his spiritual anguish. In

the end, Oedipus is the protagonist who seems to have learnt more from this experience, he repents his past behaviour and although his character does not change all of a sudden, there is a sense of better judgement. Agamemnon does not show any factual sign of learning, and it is possible that he dies without really knowing the reason. Medea, seems to have learnt from her previous mistakes such as deserting her country and repents her past behaviour. However, she commits new crimes, knowing well the price is going to be high.

The protagonists of the modern tragedies go through similar painful experiences, and there is some learning through this suffering for some of the characters. These characters do not belong to royal houses, or they do not hold the fate of a large body of people in their hands, but they, too, are pushed to the limits of their endurance.

#### **4.4 Equus**

In **Equus** there are two opposing types of distress. One is Dysart's urge to break free of the 'normal' sphere of everyday life. In contrast to it, Alan's agony stems from the realisation that he does not belong to the 'normal', everyday life.

Plunka asserts that even "at the outset of the play, Dysart recognises his shortcomings" and that his words "reflect his understanding of his "flaw"" (167). Dysart reveals his anguish which is a result of the conflict between the life he leads as a respectable psychiatrist and husband, and his lack of personal satisfaction from such a life. Dysart does not believe treating children is curing them, but he thinks it is a way of pushing them into a living death state. He has a dream in which he is the "chief-priest in Homeric Greece" and is carrying out "some immensely important ritual of sacrifice, on which depends the fate of the crops or of a military expedition" (EQUUS, 24). In this dream, Dysart is supposed to sacrifice children, and his situation is the same as that of Agamemnon, with the difference that Agamemnon has to sacrifice his own daughter while Dysart has to sacrifice other people's children. This dream is symbolic in that it shows what Dysart thinks he is doing to his patients by curing them. The dream emphasises that he is responsible for the continuation of the social system or the establishment.

After meeting Alan and penetrating into his world, Dysart begins to suffer even more. He “begins to understand more about himself and come to realise what freedom really means”(Plunka, 163), as well as realising he does not have this “freedom”. Alan has more passion than he has and more courage to live according to his desires, which increases Dysart’ distress and he becomes disgusted with himself: “The only thing is, unknown to them, I’ve started to feel distinctly nauseous. And with each victim, it’s getting worse. My face is green behind the mask” (EQUUS, 24-25). Although Dysart wants to challenge the authorities who force him to restrain children and rob them of their passions, he is trapped in the world he performs this task with a mask on his face, just like in his dream:

I redouble my efforts to look professional –cutting and snipping for all I’m worth: mainly because I know if those two assistants so much as glimpse my distress- and the implied doubt that this repetitive and smelly work is doing any social good at all- I will be next across the stone. (EQUUS, 25)

Dysart is afraid of what might happen to his comfortable life if he expresses his doubts more openly. Although he is not satisfied with his life, he also fears being an outcast, or losing his job and reputation and thus, he cannot break the chains. He will keep on suffering, drawing an analogy between a chained horse and himself “there is now, in my mouth, this sharp chain. And it never comes out” (EQUUS, 109).

What Dysart’s patient Alan goes through is quite different. In the beginning, Alan seems to be quite brave to live his life the way he wants to. The secret cult he has developed and his secret rituals at home or at the stables show his courage. However, this does not mean that Alan is free of pain. Actually, as Dysart uncovers, Alan creates a cult and a world of his own as a reaction to the distressful situation at home, which arises from the conflicting attitudes of his parents. His over-religious mother instils the awe and fear of religion in him, which paves the way for him to escape into a religion of his own making. Alan has never belonged to the ‘normal’ world. His father did not allow him to watch the TV; the stress caused by this prohibition comes out in the TV commercial songs Alan sings in his first encounter with Dysart. The distress caused by his

father's strict rules that have prevented him from establishing social interactions with other people.

When Alan is about to have his first intimate experiences with a girl, he is unsuccessful because each time he tries to kiss her, he cannot see her, his Horse-God is in the way, blocking his act. Then, he no longer yearns for a girl's "flesh", but for "the foam off his neck-His sweaty hide. Not flesh. Hide! Horse-hide! (EQUUS, 103). Then realises that he does not belong to the 'normal' world where a boy can naturally have sex with a girl. Alan is possessed by his own creation. At that stage, his disappointment in the sex act with the girl leads to an intense agony and he blinds the horses, his "gods" in the stable. Although he suffers, Alan has more courage than Dysart, who acknowledges this: "his own pain. His own. He made it" (EQUUS, 82). Even Dysart's suffering is not his own, he is not living his own life, as he wants it. Alan is suffering because he has revolted against his Gods. Gradually, through the manoeuvrings of his doctor, Alan is able to face and relive his problems. Whereas Dysart does not have the courage even to revolt. He has acquired self-knowledge: "I stand in the dark with a pick in my hand, striking at heads!" (EQUUS,108). He has learned that he abhors what he does. Yet, in the end, he still does not know how to free himself. On the contrary, he realises he "is forever a prisoner and constant defender of the 'normal' " (Plunka, 162).

Shaffer uses Dysart and Alan as foils for each other. Each reveals his innermost self himself due to his encounter with the other. In the end Dysart becomes instrumental to Alan's conforming to the accepted rules of the society. Alan's impact on Dysart, unfortunately leads to Dysart's total disillusion of himself and his society. Through his relationship with Alan, Dysart "begins to understand the inability of modern society, a vapid band of role players to invigorate our inner rives and impulses" (Plunka, 161). However, Dysart has at least "glimpsed a shadow world of the soul" (Gianakaris, 110), and learned from this tragic experience.

#### **4.5 View from the Bridge**

Eddie Carbone's suffering is psychological. He suffers because he is losing his sense of self throughout the play. To begin with, he is in agony

because he is losing his role as a protective uncle He is also wretched because he is losing his innocent niece, Cathy. Eddie has spent his life providing for Cathy whom he sees as his own daughter, and as he admits to Cathy, he has never thought that she “would ever grow up” (VIEW, 25). He is quite touched when she asks his permission to start working in a company, and he is reluctant to let her start because he wants her to do better. Finally, he gives her permission: “(sadly smiling, yet somehow proud of her) Well... I hope you have good luck. I wish you the best. You know that, kid” (VIEW, 25). His attitude shows that he both cares about her but at the same time he has far too strong attachment to her.

When Rodolpho comes into the scene and begins to flirt with Cathy, another kind of torment settles in Eddie: his sense of manhood is threatened. The obvious evidence for his feelings is his constant claim that Rodolpho is “weird”. Eddie wants to assure himself that Rodolpho is not a “man” because he does not want to be challenged in terms of sexuality. Part of Eddie’s suffering is made clear when his wife complains that they have not been intimate as husband and wife for a while:

BEATRICE: When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?

EDDIE: I ain’t been feelin’ good. They bother me since they came.

BEATRICE: It’s almost three months you don’t feel good. They’re only here a couple of weeks (VIEW, 36).

Eddie’s tries to blame the presence of Rodolpho and Marco, but Beatrice is aware that there is another reason for his retreat. Eddie’s subconscious desire to possess Cathy stops him from having sex even with his wife. Eddie is socially prohibited to have sex with Cathy, and this is the only area in which Rodolpho cannot compete with him. Therefore, Eddie wants to make sure that Rodolpho cannot be a threat for him.

Finally, Eddie loses his sense of self altogether, because he makes the people around him lose their respect for him. First, he realises his wife has begun to think less of him; when he tries to share his feelings about Rodolpho with Beatrice, she points out that he might be jealous of Rodolpho. That is something Eddie would not admit to himself:

EDDIE: That’s a nice kid? He gives me the heeby-jeebies.

BEATRICE (smiling): Ah, go on, you’re just jealous.

EDDIE: Of him? Boy, you don't think much of me (VIEW, 34)

Eddie has always thought of himself as a family man, who tries to do his best. However, Beatrice and Alfieri challenge him by telling him what he actually feels in quite a straightforward way, which hurts Eddie a lot:

ALFIERI: She wants to get married, Eddie. She can't marry you, can she?

EDDIE (furiously): What're you talkin' about, marry me! I don't know what the hell you're talking about! (VIEW, 49)

Eddie pretends not to understand what Beatrice and Alfieri point at because he does not stop to reflect on his deeper thoughts and feelings.

When at the very end of the play Beatrice exposes his weakest point, Eddie is terrified: "You want somethin' else, Eddie, and you can never have her!" (VIEW, 83). He can neither admit the truth about himself nor face it openly. When he eventually informs on his relatives, the only thing he realises is that he has lost his self-image in front of people, especially when Marco insults him in front of the whole neighbourhood as an informer. Eddie knows he is going to be "despised because he betrays the social bond out of a solipsistic desire to affirm his selfhood, to dominate his circumstances" (Bigsby, 202). He knows he should not have informed against his relatives. He does not show any sign of regret for doing that because he is blinded with the overwhelming desire to stop any man coming near Cathy.

Being stripped off his protective masks, Eddie finds he has lost everything he could count on: his image of himself, his dignity as a man. In the end, Eddie does not learn anything from his anguish. He does not seem to realise his desire for Cathy, he does not repent trying to end Cathy's and Rodolpho's relationship and he does not try to make peace with Marco. Finally, he is totally unaware of the real reason for his own death. That all the suffering has been wasted without any awareness of his ordeal, makes Eddie a most pitiful tragic protagonist. However, Eddie acquires a certain dignity by refusing to back down, by being faithful to his ideal, "even if the ideal is false and one's fidelity to it finally lethal", which Miller calls an "intensity of commitment" (Eagleton, 99). Even Alfieri admires him in the end because he "allowed himself to be wholly known", to be wholly explored as who he really is" (VIEW, 85).

#### **4.6 Long Day's Journey into Night**

O'Neill's play is one of deep suffering for all the members of the family. For James Tyrone, there are many causes of distress. First of all, his acting career he gave so much importance to is over. He realises that he has made some mistakes when choosing which plays to act in, and he has not been able to come to a stage, in his career, where he would like to be. Secondly, his family life is quite problematic. He has a dope-addict of a wife and two alcoholic sons, one of whom is sick and the other is always against him. There are constant conflicts in the house, and James is blamed for most of the problems each member has. He also has to satisfy his love for money and his frugality.

In the beginning, James Tyrone dismisses the family members' complaints and charges, as he tells Edmund, "will you stop repeating your mother's crazy accusations, which she never makes unless it's the poison talking?" (JOURNEY, 142). However, by the end of the play, he begins to admit that he was too money-oriented and that he has made mistakes in his life: "Yes, maybe life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor" (JOURNEY, 149). These comments, which Tyrone makes for the first time, shows that his sufferings and his family's suffering has not been in vain; they have started to recognise themselves and their mistakes, thus have learnt something from their ordeal.

Mary is ill with misery as well. She constantly refers to her life before her marriage, and idealises those years: "At the convent I had so many friends. Girls whose families lived in lovely homes" (86). She believes she could be happier if she had stuck to her first ideal of becoming a nun. Her marriage has "always been as lonely as a dirty room in a one-night stand hotel. In a real home one is never lonely" (JOURNEY, 72). She has experienced difficult events and suffered a lot. The best example for these pains is losing her baby and the pains she endured while giving birth to Edmund.

Jamie's grief stems from his childhood. His jealousy for his dead brother and his stress from being left behind while his parents were on tour inflict a lot of pain on him. Jamie is old enough to have witnessed his mother becoming a drug addict, although he knows it is not her fault. To make things worse, he is also

aware of his father's role in this addiction, his mother's despair and the cheap doctor who has led to this situation. Jamie tries to relieve himself through alcohol and women, neither of which is an answer to his distress. That he is not able to form healthy relationship or find himself a good job because of his alcoholism increases this torment. Jamie cannot associate with more decent people because of his upbringing, so he spends his time with prostitutes and drinking. Finally, by the end of the play, Jamie admits that he has tried to spoil Edmund, because he was jealous: "Never wanted you to succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama's baby, Papa's pet!" (JOURNEY, 165). Jamie's acceptance of this fact is crucial, as it reveals his spiritual vexation and the feelings of guilt as well as showing that he has learnt from his suffering, and that even though he might not be able to change completely in one night, he wants Edmund to learn the truth.

Finally, the accumulation of all the family member's sufferings seem to be collected in Edmund. Edmund does not feel he belongs to the family and he is the most sensitive of the four:

It was a great mistake I was born a man, I would have been much more successful as a sea gull or fish. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, and who must always be a little in love with death. (JOURNEY, 153-154)

Edmund has never felt real love or support from his family. Mary seems to like him and treat him like the baby of the house, but she is more involved in her drug-initiated life. Jamie has always been jealous of Edmund, and has tried to ruin his life, and the father has been strict and mean. All of these have made Edmund feel that he is not welcome in the family, that he is stranded. Apart from fretting for his family relationships, Edmund's illness is causing him physical pain as well. Edmund's illness symbolically makes all the pain of the family graphic.

By the time the play ends, all four members of the family have fallen from their illusory worlds of security, and this fall is met with fear and pity. Falk asserts that the family members torment each other and strip away every illusion of security, and that in the end they have to face each other with some

tolerance and pity (10-11). That the Tyrones are finally able to come to a better understanding of themselves and each other means they have learned some wisdom from their affliction. There is some hope yet for a united family. After all, in Mary's words, "It can't be altogether lost" (JOURNEY, 173).

The protagonists of modern tragedy experience similar sufferings to the protagonists of Greek tragedy, and not all of them can arrive to deeper understanding of themselves. Just as Agamemnon, Eddie dies without becoming aware of his real feelings towards Cathy, and even if he realises them, he is unable to cope with it. One difference is that Eddie exposes his suffering all through the play, while Agamemnon does not show it. Dysart suffers as much as his patient Alan, but he learns two important facts through his anguish: that his passionless life is not what he wants to have, but that he is unable to change it. For the Tyrone family, suffering is an important tool that ties them together, and "Nothing would have happened had they not been capable of submitting themselves to each other, of undergoing the agony not only of self-disclosure but of listening to the disclosures of the others" (Sewall, 169). Their eagerness to hold together despite suffering helps them to come closer, to learn more about themselves and other members of the family, which helps them to stick together.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, common themes that are present in the three chosen Greek tragedies and the three so-called modern tragedies have been discussed. In all the plays, the protagonists who have certain innate beliefs and values come across conflicting situations which require them to choose between standing for their beliefs or backing down. The decision of the protagonist leads him to commit an error, which in turn leads to suffering and pain. This structure is present in all the plays, and therefore the modern plays can be called tragedies.

The first common feature of all the protagonists is that they have innate values or beliefs that they are even ready to die for. According to Eagleton, the Greeks have “the belief that value simply lies in not backing down” (232). However, the same belief that the one who backs up devalues himself in his own eyes is also valid in the modern tragedies. Of the protagonists of the six plays, only Dysart fails to stand for his beliefs, and in the end he is a spiritually dead man who has lost his self-esteem.

In some situations, the upheld values are morally right initially whereas the way the protagonists react to the conflict and defend their values make them "evil" or "wrong". For instance, Agamemnon's choice is one that appeals to two different sets of values he has. He either has to put on the hat of a leader or that of a father. Agamemnon does not have “wrong” or “evil” values; he just has to choose between two right ones. When he chooses, he acts in the best possible way. In Oedipus' case, Oedipus has done everything he can think of to evade the curse, and he tries to solve the problems of his people. His values are right, but they lead him to a realisation of his nightmare and lead to his fall. Medea, who seems to be less sympathetic, also has “right” values about marriage and loyalty. However, her crime of murdering her own children and her previous deeds

make her “evil”. Like Agamemnon, Dysart also has two sets of beliefs: one which relates to his professional, responsible side; and another that relates to his passionate, more primitive side. In the end, he falls because he cannot stick to his own “call” for passion and spontaneity. In contrast, Eddie Carbone falls because he follows his own beliefs without considering whether they are “right” or “evil”. Eddie uses his values as excuses to achieve his more primitive goal, the one which is against his own principles as well, and in the end he dies. Finally, the Tyrones all have a set of beliefs that they cannot share in the beginning of the play. No one understands the others' set of values. However, the members of the family begin to understand each other towards the end of the play as they try to listen to each other.

Another common trait of the protagonists is that they all share some characteristics such as a love for passion and freedom, a drive to protect their dignity and the courage and endurance to do it. Without these features, the protagonists would not be able to face the situations they come across. Oedipus blinds himself to recover his human dignity; Medea can kill her own children rather than lose her dignity to her enemies' mockery. Eddie dies trying to restore his stolen dignity from Marco. The Tyrone family tries to stay together as a family and remain human. Only Agamemnon and Dysart seem to lack this struggle for dignity. Agamemnon does not express his conflict and suffering openly, so it is quite difficult to comment on his search for dignity. On the other hand, Dysart loses his dignity by refusing to let his stronger beliefs that are against the social code rule him.

Both the innate values and the character traits lead the protagonists into conflicts. Each protagonist finds himself in a different type of conflict. Agamemnon has to choose between avenging his brother and the country and sacrificing his own daughter. Oedipus has to struggle in order to discover the truths about his own parentage and his kingdom's salvage. Medea is left helpless in a foreign country with nowhere to turn to by her husband who leaves her for another woman. Dysart has to take a stand by choosing whether to cure Alan or not, which is a choice between letting his instincts free or complying with the social order. Eddie finds himself in conflict with his illegal relative who is dating his niece. Seemingly, this is a protective uncle's struggle to defend

his niece's innocence, but it is Eddie's struggle with his own primitive instincts. The cause of conflict for these three protagonists is that the society forbids what they naturally desire. The Tyrones have to submit to each other's inner feelings so that they can be understood by the other members of the family.

The conflicts push each protagonist to make a choice, and this decision making process is similar in all the plays in that all the decisions are made in isolation, with the protagonist not being able to get help from anyone. When Agamemnon is deciding whether to choose his daughter or his military responsibility, there is no one he can share this problem with and find a solution to it. Oedipus is also totally alone. When he hears of the curse, he has to decide on his own and leave his country. Medea cannot consult anyone either; not only because her plans are evil and should be kept as secrets, but also because it is a decision only she can make. The magnitude of all the decisions is too large to be shared. In the modern plays, although the scales of the problems are not that huge, the protagonists cannot share them due to a lack of empathy from others. When Dysart tries to open his feelings to the magistrate, she cannot empathise with him or share his conflict. In **View from the Bridge**, although Eddie's wife and the lawyer can empathise with him and try to offer him a solution for his problem through their advice, Eddie does not listen to them for two main reasons. Firstly, he is at a stage in which he listens only to his own voice and not other people. Specifically, he rejects Alfieri's and Beatrice's advice because they are openly telling him what he does not want to know. The tragic heroes cannot be comforted by anyone, and they have to rely on themselves whatever they decide to do. Only in **Long Day's Journey into Night** there is some evidence of empathy towards the end where the father and the sons seem to be more willing to share their inner feelings with each other, and try to understand the mother.

Thus, the decisions made as reactions to the conflicts turn out to be "hamartia", and all the protagonists have to suffer. Draper claims that tragedy shows suffering in a way which "modulates initial protest into final acceptance" (in Eagleton, 31). Another mark of the tragic hero is his ability to accept and put up with the pain which arises from his mistakes. All the protagonists bear with their own anguish, they do not receive any help or comfort from other people around them. They do not deny their responsibility, although Agamemnon

do not and Eddie can not admit their responsibilities. The protagonists of the modern tragedies do not belong to a royal house like the Greeks, but each one is a unique individual, with a unique experience, pushed as far as he/she could endure. This enduring power is another hallmark of tragedy.

One important point to consider is what these sufferings amount to in the end. One of fundamental features of Greek tragedy is "anagnorisis", meaning "a change from ignorance to knowledge that results in a reversal of disposition", which also involves discovery or recognition (Valency, 74). The plays in this study all involve a reversal of situation, but not all of them entail a recognition or learning on the part of the protagonist. Agamemnon does not show any awareness of his responsibility and of the reason why his wife murders him. Oedipus realises his past behaviour, especially towards Creon, has been wrong. There is some learning and a step towards maturity, though he does not change drastically. The ends of Agamemnon and Oedipus bring some sense of relief, as Agamemnon has wronged and he should be punished, and Oedipus punishes himself for his pride. In the beginning of the play, Medea seems to have learnt from her past experiences that evil leads to evil, but in the play she commits further evil, and does not repent it. That she is portrayed triumphant in the end suggests there has been no real learning. Dysart is one of the protagonists who realises that he is not living the life he wants, and at the same time he does not have enough courage and driving force to change it. In the end of the play, his inner conflict is not solved, and there is no real hope that he will solve it. Eddie does not learn from his tragic experience. The Tyrones begin to recognise each other as individuals and try to empathise, and the play has the only hopeful ending among the six plays.

The main difference between Greek tragedies and modern tragedies is the fact that modern tragedy gives more weight to psychological make-ups of the characters. The modern tragedies are more heavily based on depicting and revealing the turns and twists of psychological turmoil of the characters. In ancient Greek tragedies, what happened in the past has a bearing in what happens in the present. In modern tragedies, what happened in the past is what gives shape to the protagonists' present psychological state. The characters are already in a state of psychological agitation whereas in the Greek tragedies the

heroes are more secure, self-confident and strong from the very beginning of the plays. Still, there is psychological turmoil in Greek tragedy, especially in **Oedipus Rex** and **Medea**. That Freud has borrowed his “Oedipus Complex” from the play shows that the Greeks were aware of human psychology and its effects on life although they did not study it systematically as the psychologists of the modern era. The depiction of Medea’s psychology is an early example of treating the psychology of the individual in tragic plays, bringing the play closer to modern tragedies where man’s inner struggle are foregrounded. In conclusion, despite certain differences **Equus**, **A View From the Bridge** and **Long Day's Journey Into Night** can be called modern tragedies that carry the same themes and codes with their Greek ancestors.

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