

The Concept of Tragedy and the Meaning of Death: A Study of Four Plays

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ABSTRACT

This research is descriptive-qualitative with the aim at finding the difference in the concept of tragedy and the meaning of death in four plays from four different eras. The plays studied in this research were *Oedipus the King*, *Hamlet*, *The Wild Duck* and *Death of A Salesman*. Those represent respectively the classical time, Elizabethan era, modern (19th century), and 20th century (post-second World War).

The data of the research were in the form of verbal expressions (phrases, sentences, and dialogues) taken from the plays which were in accordance with the objectives of the research. The data were then grouped into categories according to the objectives of the research. The next steps were interpreting, describing, presenting the data in the analysis.

The result of the analysis showed that; 1) genre of tragedy in drama underwent development and changes from the classical to modern era, 2) the development includes the concept and elements of tragedy and the meaning of death, 3) classical and Elizabethan tragedy possess parallels and similarities in their narrative structures and characterization, but differ in the presentation of the tragic heroes and the meaning of death, 4) in general, modern tragedies differ from classical and Elizabethan tragedies, and in particular, in the factors triggering the tragedy, characterization of the tragic heroes, and the meaning of death for the readers (audience), 5) the development and change of the concept of tragedy and the meaning of death are the results of the changes and development of social and belief systems, complexity of social and economic reality, and of the development in literature and literary criticism.

Kata Kunci: *drama, tragedy, the meaning of death*