

Reshaping Darkness: A New Prospect for Tragic Literature from the Perspective of Hope, Resilience and Novel Connotations

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Received: 19 April 2026; **Accepted:** 21 May 2026; **Published:** 03 June 2026

Abstract: The exposure to tragic literature provides a unique attitude towards the human experience in dealing with pain, mortality, and vulnerability. The tragic genre is not just a collection of unfortunate events, but a tool to reformulate mentally and emotionally, so the genre shows that misfortune can be used to develop ethically, develop compassion, and create solidarity (Christensen et al., 2022). The paper follows the evolution of tragedy beginning with the tenets of the ancient Greece drama to the medieval and Renaissance versions of the tragedy up to the present-day existential types of tragedy, thus making it clear that the tragic experience is more than a form of negation and is more of affirmation. The paper imposes that, amidst integrating Aristotelian poetics, existential philosophy and modern-day psychological resilience theory, it is through the notion of tragic hope which is endurance anchored in dignity and creating meaning through embracing darkness that emerges. In turn, tragedy developed the moral imagination, which promotes resilience and recognizes the seriousness of the real world and, at the same time, seeks connection and meaning, and an examination of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Hosseini, McCarthy work proves it.

Keywords: Tragic Literature, Hope and Resilience, Existentialism, Aristotelian Catharsis, Psychological Resilience, Moral Imagination, Human Suffering, Meaning-Making, Post-Traumatic Growth, Literary Psychology, Existential Philosophy, Tragic Hope, Emotional Resilience,

Introduction

The idea of tragedy has conventionally played a contradictory role in human thought. It has customarily been described as a kind of overlap of human will with forces beyond control like fate, divinities or systemic oppression leading up to inevitable misery. However, the perennial fascination by the tragic literature leads to the conclusion that the latter provides more than a simple repeat of the desire to have nothing left. This discussion studies how tragedy reflects unavoidable

facts of loss, grief and vulnerability, as well as serves as a vessel of meaning-making (McCoy, 2013). In times of hardest struggle, tragic heroes often reach a level of meaning and a higher relation and understanding which are unobtainable to them in comfortable times.

The main question in this context will be whether the aspect of darkness can be seen as a constructive force not towards accomplishing suffering itself but rather

with the ability to create good results in terms of generating new solutions, moral growth, and societal integration. The paper will argue that tragic literature is a kind of laboratory of the human mind, a safe environment where the reader and the audience are exposed to the boundaries of volitional containment. Combining the old concepts of catharsis and the new concept of existentialism along with psychological knowledge about the resilience, it is possible to include the tragedy as an essential tool of coping with the complexity of human life (Christensen et al., 2022).

This paper focuses on the development of the tragic form by incorporating historical literary research along with the current psychological theory to shed light on how the relations between suffering and meaning in different epochs have been conceptualized. The paper will then examine the theoretical principle underpinning the concept of tragic hope in opposition to the historical fatalism and the present-day resilience, which is agency-based. After all, examining examples of chosen stories, the paper will also show how embracing the concept of darkness helps one to transform oneself, not to mention the fact that even in the bleakest of setting, the idea of human spirit can create light.

Tragic Usage Evolution

Tragic form is not yet another inert object: it is actually the dynamic phenomenon which has developed during millenniums, reflecting the changes in theological, philosophical and cultural structures of human community. Though the essence of the genre to challenge the aspects of grief, loss and the various obstacles of living has not changed much, the structural and thematic delivery has evolved greatly (Loftus, 2022). This development follows a path of historical progression between the extrinsic, mythic causality of antiquity (in which the human agency was often overshadowed by the deity will) and the internalized psychological complexities of renaissance and finally, these are the systemic existential dilemmas of modernity. On the analyses of those historic changes, it was noted that tragedy has always played not only as a depiction of tragedy but also as an active act of interpretation, which is capable of mending the cultural memory and supplying new ways of survival in the context of evolving situations.

Fate and Civil Ceremony

The causes of the tragedy in ancient Greece were very much intertwined with the civil and religious life of the city-state. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, playwrights, created stories where the human will scored off divine will. Here, the downfall of the main character, which could be due to hamartia (error) or moira (fate), was not a chance misfortune but a demonstration of a reasoned universe (Aristotle, 350 - 2000). However, the aim of these plays was not to entertain only; these plays were communal rituals.

According to scholar Marina McCoy, these texts served a teleological purpose through this expression of the woundedness (McCoy, 2013). The Iliad and the writings of Sophocles outline a distinction between the unchangeable and carefree gods and mortal humans, thus highlighting that the death of human beings gives their interpersonal connections some ethical relevance (Homer, 1990; Sophocles, 429BCE). Suffering as a whole in the amphitheatre helped the citizens to recognize their vulnerability as a group, as well as to establish civic empathy with each other, which is essential to democracy. Thus, the obscurity of Greek tragedy became a binding solution, social cohesive aspect as it brought together people to the understanding of the borders.

Medieval and Renaissance Redefinitions

The metaphysical landscape was redefined in a radical way during the transition period of the genre in the medieval period. In this context, Christian theology reshaped tragedy in the sense of adopting a providential paradigm. Suffering had ceased to have been the product rigorously speaking of arbitrary fate; it was more and more being comprehended as a symptom of sin or as an ordeal of faith. As an example, Christus Patiens uses a tragic form to represent suffering as not an abyss in existence but as a means to achieve adjustedness with God (Rachel, 2017). It is possible to regard the inclusion of the element of darkness in this period as highly redemptive: the suffering is a kettle in which a soul is washed.

With Shakespeare being a prime example, a fine humanist nuanced complexity was added in the Renaissance. The locus of tragedy in the plays, like the

King Lear and Hamlet, moves inward. In spite of the fact that external fate is also mentioned, there is a focus on character psychology, an inadequate decision-making process and ambiguity of justice (Jing and Li, 2025). As a result, the form of tragedy is enriched with the complex analysis of the conflicting motives. The darkness of Lear is ultimate emptiness where the theme of blindness is active in its literal and symbolic meaning; here it is in this emptiness that Lear is able to perceive the true meaning of love and humility. Therefore, the Renaissance tragedy highlights the fact that wisdom can be a rather expensive price of sorrow.

Modern and Existential Forces

Today, mythological deific archetypes or "Gods" of classical tragedy have been replaced by social forms of oppression, military conflicts, and capitalist systems, but the primary conflict remains the same. What Kierkegaard influenced is an existentialist redefinition of tragedy in terms of conflict between human autonomy and a constraint of significant importance (Kierkegaard, 1843/1983). Usually, it is the tragedy that lies in the necessity to choose in spite of limitations. The examples provided in modern novels, such as Khaled Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and Naguib Mahfouz in *The Thief and the Dogs*, show that the characters in these novels take agency not by the fact that they avoid the fate (war, patriarchy or corruption (Hosseini, 2007; Mahfouz, 1961), but by living together to withstand it and stand up to it with their principles.

Theoretical Frameworks

To understand the transformative power of tragic literature it is essential to transcend its historical heritage and look at the cognitive mechanisms which regulate its perception. The ability of darkness to create light is not a mere technique in narration; in fact, the given process is a phenomenon, which may be based on certain philosophical and psychological theories providing the way in which people react to their calamity. The context of this section is to put under scrutiny the theoretical foundation of the tragic experience by incorporating into it ancient poetics by Aristotle and contemporary resilience theory and modern existentialism. By considering the correlation between external constraints and internal freedom and also the cognitive refining found in catharsis, we are

able to reach a vigorous model of explaining why reading literary suffering helps in the growth of ethics and meaning-making.

A True Paradox: Salvation in Limitation

Existentialism offers an analysis of the possibility of positivity to darkness. It theorizes that meaning cannot exist in the world; it is brought about by a form of interaction with nothingness. This is apparent in the tragic literature where characters lose their outward supports-status, family and security and are forced to build a new one. It is the ideology of the rejection of passive victimhood that employs the essence of tragic dignity (Huemer, 2018). Kierkegaard believes that human coerciveness and agency, as opposed to the will of the deity, marks the onset of the modernity tragedies and marks the beginning of self-understanding and responsibility (Kierkegaard, 1843/1983). Elevated illusion is broken down when a character in the play like Hamlet is faced with absurdity of death (Alexander returneth into dust). This is not a pleasant encounter but it is necessary to face this in genuine life. This new tragic hero is a man who looks into the abyss and continues to exist, which is reflected in the works of Camus and Sartre (Astrakhan, 2020).

Perceptual Reshaping of Aristotelian Catharsis

The principle of catharsis as formulated by Aristotle in terms of pity reduction and apprehension is still fundamental; nevertheless, more sophisticated meaning of modern psychodynamic theory is given to it (Aristotle, 350 BCE). To be more exact, catharsis nowadays is a reprocessing or, to be more precise, a cognitive reprocessing instead of an emotional venting. An audience lives vicariously through the dismal demise of a protagonist, as mere observers. This meditation of symbols allows people to experience the difficult affective conditions, such as grief and vulnerability, inside the safe paradigm of a storytelling format (University of Chicago Reception Studies Group, 2023). This theoretical position is supported by the contemporary scholarship in the medical humanities. Empirical research in palliative care states that empowerment through mortality narratives may result in a reconceptualization of hope. In the case when it is impossible to find a positive solution (i.e. a cure), hope is redefined as healing (the assimilative process of

identifying meaning) (Haufe et al., 2020). This change is supported by tragic literature, which disengages hope and the realization of something positive, from this perspective, a good ending is not only determined by the survival of the hero but by the moral cleanness or resolution (Escritt et al., 2022).

Tools of Resilience in Tragic Stories

The intellectual explanations behind the mission of extracting meaning out of suffering are given by the philosophy, and the psychological processes involved in resilience give explanations about how that change takes place in the reader. Tragic stories do not simply represent a misfortune but a simulated world a psychological space where the wild nature of grief, fear and vulnerability can be safely faced and reformatted. This part moves beyond the abstract to the functional and examines the particular cognitive and emotional processes that the tragic form upsets. In the analysis of literary features like symbolism and conflict as the factors that lead to emotional control and growth, we will prove that reading a tragedy is not just an inactive and contemptible process of life, but a practice of adapting to the challenges in the world that we cannot avoid in any way.

Affect, Melancholy and Symbolism

Tragic text functions as an empirical environment of the exploration of the affect processes. Empirical research indicates that exposure to melancholic or tragic depictions triggers what has been termed as meta-emotions, which comprises positive evaluations of personal empathic ability, thus being associated with an increase in self-awareness (Christensen et al., 2022). Symbolic mediation is both detached and personal and a reader can simultaneously experience the distress of the victim and maintain a detached analytic gaze to extract valuable insights. This procedure corresponds with the principle of a so-called dark tourism, when people come to locations of historical trauma and get some sense and allow society to have some empathy (Shekhar & Valeri, 2022).

The wound as a repeated motif in literary works, such as the foot of Philoctetes, which he had on the battlefield and caused him pain, or psychogenic scars which Sethe bears in Toni Morrison *Beloved* (2004), is one of the

main thematic instruments of this interrogation (Morrison, 2004). The wound is not simply a physical damage but an indicator of the biographical story of the character and his or her relationship to the world in terms of relation to humanity. By reading such symbols, the readers also gain empathy skills, where they learn to suffer and reject any such suffering without rushing into finding the solution or never contemplating its presence, which is essential in reducing compassion fatigue (Organization for Trauma Studies, 2021).

Post-Traumatic Evolution

Disturbance in tragic storylines is rarely addressed in a way that is satisfying; however, in the process of development, lack of it helps. The expression of the boundary situations used by Karl Jaspers refers to the cases of guilt, sufferings, and mortality which are reflected on the description of tragic examples. These episodes make both characters and readers redefine their sense of value, therefore, hinting at the psychological construct of Posttraumatic Growth (PTG), when individuals develop favorable psychological changes after undergoing a crisis (Senneseth et al., 2022).

In literature of shared trauma, as in post-war literature, tragedy often focuses on an experience of collective strength rather than individual experience. The idea of tragic hope is the maintenance of the collective memory and identity. The body of empirical evidence on resilience of a community during the aftermath of a disaster is consistent with this literary theme and proves that the process of recovering the psychological state of people is impossible without collective narratives about survival (Vandrevala et al., 2021). The literature such as fiction confirms the plight of the reader and offers readers a paradigm of resilience, which is similar to pivotal events in sports stories that make practitioner growth possible (Wadsworth et al., 2021).

Literary Case Studies: Light behind Darkness

The overlapping of existential philosophy and psychological resilience will be best articulated using lived narrative experiences and not using theoretical definitions. The literary area of the conceptual construct of tragic hope reaches a strong level with regard to such distinct literary location as the war torn streets in Kabul,

the wasteland heath of the post-Christian Britain, and the future ashes filled courses of a post-apocalyptic environment. This sub part goes through the mechanistic foundation of resilience to the phenomenological realization and examines three individual accounts that give evidence of how illumination comes out of darkness. What is explained through the analysis of the paths that particular protagonists go through is the usage of endurance, mental re-framing, and moral solidarity over the face of massive tragedies, and thus provides the reader with specific examples of meaning as will be developed through the aftermath of disaster.

A Thousand Splendid Suns: Unity of the Oppressed

Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* provides a model of tragic hope in the modern world. Mariam and Laila are the main characters suffering under the system and victimized by the war in Afghanistan. There is no doubt about the fact that their lives are dark, with the elements of loss and restriction. However, the novel gives them a clue that their suffering is not in vain. Their relationship also helps them find a way of flaunting the tyrant systems that they are in (Hosseini, 2007). The ultimate sacrifice that Mariam makes is a very tragic event, but it is described as a demonstration of deep agency and love. This so-called positive outcome is no historical "Happening", but a declaration of human "humanness" against the dehumanizing forces.

King Lear: Seeing through Loss of sight

Shakespeare's *King Lear* is usually considered the most barren of tragedies; however, the play holds a convincingly insightful argument to the importance of suffering. Lear does not start feeling empathy toward the impoverished naked wretches of his kingdom until he is stripped of his crown, his house and becomes mentally unstable (Jing and Li, 2025). In an analogous case, it is only after experiencing actual blindness that the Earl of Gloucester is able to gain true understanding. The play suggests that the shadows of the loss are the isolation space where the light of the truth can be perceived. Despite the tragic ending, such as the eventual death of Lear, the transformation of the character as he suddenly becomes a humble person is a common characteristic of a very admirable moral

development.

The Road: Hope in Despair

The book *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy depicts a setting after an apocalypse, with nearly no life or colour. It is this darkness with such extent to which the bonding between father and son acquires exceptionally glowing dynamic. The refusal of the father to give up on hope and surrender to despair, the self-willingness of carrying the fire is an exemplary sign of the perseverance of human kindness in the given cases when the outside world does not confirm it (McCarthy, 2006). The story assumes that the sense of a moral duty to another person remains even when all the structures of the society are destroyed. The inherent worth of battling the dark clouds is based on persisting determination of not knowing the future but the moral and ethical need of such behavior.

Discussion: Hope Redelineated by Tragedy

Tragic literature is fundamentally significant to the well-being discourse in redefining hope. In a society that is often obsessed with the concept of toxic positivity, negativity denial, tragedy provides a realistic solution. It also suggests that hope cannot be understood as the expectation of positive things happening, but as a belief that things are significant regardless of the consequences (Snyder, 2002). This hope of tragedy is resilient. It has been exposed to the most extreme situations that human imagination can conceive. A palliative care patient will be finding comfort in legacy but not a cure (Best et al., 2015). The dream of a justice is of activist, who knows too well that he/she might not live to see the victory. The formation of purpose and career counseling is a phenomenon that is associated with the literature reporting that purpose may be developed even under the most restrictive conditions and even during the COVID-19 pandemic (S. Afr. J. Sci., 2022). Readers develop this kind of hope through their exposure to tragic works. They find out that though they might be powerless in the context of the narrative of their lives, they are free to decide on their responses.

Conclusion: Value of Darkness

Literary, philosophical and psychological approaches to the issue prove that darkness is not the exact opposite of light, but instead comes as the background against

which meaning can best be distinguished. Since the gloomy Greece of the fateful tragedies to the existential confusion of modern literature, tragedy brings us to the face of suffering. It provides the tools of resilience including empathy, ethical judgment and the power to reframe adversity; hence a framework in which adversity may be utilized to develop. The paper concludes that darkness could be accepted and it could bring win-win results. All those results are not material ones but internal changes: strengthening will, upgrading empathy, and exposing true values. According to the tragic literature, we are not as helpless as we are not agency-free. Tragic heroes have to persevere when they are reminding us of our ability to endure, to solve, and to find hope in the unstoppable shadows.

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