
HAMARTIA IN SHAKESPEARE’S GREAT TRAGEDIES

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Abstract: Shakespeare is well known for his tragedies. They have been subjects to many analysis and studies, since there is always something that can be discussed about. In my paper, I am going to deal with a specific element of tragedies, an element that makes Shakespeare’s tragedies so great, and it is *hamartia*. In fact, we see that Shakespeare follows the structure of Aristotelian theory of tragedies, so we can find all elements of Greek tragedies, like *hamartia*, *anagnorisis*, *peripeteia*, *catharsis*, etc. in his tragedies. My paper covers an overview of *hamartia* of major characters in greatest Shakespeare’s tragedies, like *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. First, there is an explanation of what *hamartia* in fact is, and then, an analysis of the characters of the tragic heroes. Here we can stress the faults that lead them to their downfall and eventually to their destruction. We see that *King Lear* is destroyed by his excessive pride, *Hamlet* by his desire to revenge, his dilemma and inaction, *Macbeth* by his ambition, *Othello* by his jealousy, *Richard* by his ambition, desire to prove a villain, etc., and all this affects other people in their surrounding, what makes the tragedy even greater. Even though each of the heroes represents a specific character, we can see that they are all victims of their own mistakes and faults, so they all share the same tragic fate. However, their downfall makes them realize their wrongdoings, where the element of *anagnorisis* is present, but it is too late for them, they have destroyed their own life, and also affected the lives of people around them, people they love and care about, bringing many deaths, a lot of violence and pain. Then, I will compare the flaws of each major character or hero, so that we can see if they have anything in common, and how similar they are. So, we can see how *hamartia* rules and affects the lives of these great people, how their great personalities are destroyed and end tragically. On the other side, the mastery of Shakespeare in portraying and building characters is very evident, since these characters are unique, and considered an element that gave Shakespeare the epithet of the greatest playwright. I know that my paper is just a drop in the ocean, since Shakespeare’s studies are never-ending, and there is a lot to be said in the future too, but I hope it will be a modest contribution for further studies.

Keywords: Shakespeare, tragedy, *hamartia*, play, characters.

INTRODUCTION

It is a great responsibility but even a greater pleasure to write about Shakespeare. His mastery is noticed in the language, vocabulary, grammar, poetic style etc., of each of his plays, either comedies or tragedies.

In this paper we’ll deal with tragedies. Shakespeare’s tragedies are great milestones in literature. It is clear that Shakespeare followed the template of Aristotle’s tragedies, which always dealt with tragic events and had an unhappy ending. However, the convention of tragedy requires certain tragic elements, and thus, in Shakespeare’s tragedies, we can distinguish all elements that Aristotle named in his *Poetics* as elements of a tragedy: tragic hero, *hamartia*, *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, *catharsis*, tragic hero etc.

Shakespearean tragedy is essentially the tragedy of a character, the story of a tragic hero. These heroes are always persons of the highest rank, save one, *Othello*. His famous tragic characters- *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Antony*, *Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*- they all known for their nobility, courage and greatness. However, they deal with a lot of difficulties, agonies, evil and they end with their death. We have to understand what constitutes a tragic hero and how does a great burden of tragedy rests in their shoulders and give the dramatic impact to the tragedy. In fact, this tragedy and suffering reveals the nature of men, the sense of human greatness and nobility, human actions, and the capacities of the human nature to suffer.

Hamartia is a literary term that refers to a personality trait of the protagonist that leads to his or her downfall due to the personal defect of character. Aristotle talks about it in his work *Poetics*, and defines it as ‘some error of judgment or frailty’⁶² that brings about misfortune of a tragic hero. It comes from the Greek word *hamartanein* which means “to err”. The hero of the drama is superior in all aspects, except in one fatal defect in character, which causes his downfall. This error is the cause of his wrongdoings, or his doing the opposite things of what he aimed or tried to do.

⁶² Aristoteli; *Poetika*, Buzuku, Prishtine, 1998, p.81

Many critics point out that this error of judgment results from ignorance or arrogance while others contend that it is a moral mistake or flaw covering a gamut of faults resulting from emotional climaxes including wrath.

According to Aristotle, ‘Wrongdoings of the class of hamartia is just the type of wrongdoing which is pitied and forgiven in the proper tragic sense...hamartia does not mean a disposition of deliberate wickedness’⁶³

J. M. Bremer maintains that hamartia means ‘a wrong action committed in ignorance of its nature, effect, etc., which is the starting point of a causally connected train of events ending in disaster’⁶⁴. A tragic hero’s hamartia resulting from the lack of moderation causes his downfall and reverses his fortune what makes him fall from happiness to misery or what Aristotle termed as “peripeteia”. In this way, fate is transformed from some metaphysical concept -- "the will of the gods," "the divine order of the cosmos" etc. -- to one in which we see *our fates as tied to inherent elements of our selves*, of our *psyches*, our own personal characteristics, that ordain our destinies.

In simple words, hamartia means that you cannot escape your own personality; there are elements of ourselves from which we simply cannot escape, and, for the Greeks, these elements are "inherited" and will sometimes determine the course of our lives.

So, just like in Greek tragedies, Shakespeare too built each one of his tragic heroes with a flaw in their personality, a normal human emotion or characteristic taken to its extreme, which directly leads to their downfall, a flaw that shines a light on some of the darker characteristics of humanity. However, to say about any hero that he acted that way and he was wrong, is misleading, when in a society those things are permitted we just cannot lay the blame on the tragic character alone. So the concept of *hamartia* has to be broadened enough to include the entire network of things. Chance, accident, circumstances, and the craftiness of others; all play their parts in bringing down the ruin on the tragic hero. *Hamartia* should not be abstracted to mean just a congenital disease of character; it should be seen in the entire gamut of tragic happenings. The most radical feature of Shakespearean tragedy is that after the fall there is the spiritual growth of man.

SHAKESPEARE’S TRAGIC HEROES AND THEIR HAMARTIA

Shakespeare created a lot of great characters, who are real milestones in literature. Their greatness is undoubtedly due to their flaws. So let us see some of the greatest flaws of the great Shakespeare’s heroes.

King Lear- King Lear is among Shakespeare’s most complicated tragedies, partly because the many subplots that it has. In King Lear Shakespeare portrays a king, whose arrogance, innate sense of superiority, great wrath, and error of judgment bring a great turmoil on the British territory. Proving himself as a cruel father and a ruthless dictator, Lear reveals his evil and selfish nature by giving his kingdom to his evil daughters, only because he believed in their insincere flattering words, when telling him how much they love him, and disinheriting his honest Cordelia, who was honest and sincere and could not flatter. It is this susceptibility to flattery that in fact is a weak point for a king who is supposed to rule over a country and of course unconvincing and unjustifiable. Lear’s sense of superiority is his greatest hamartia which takes towards inaccurate judgment, insistence on his rash decisions, and ultimately destruction and downfall. He is very proud and such selfishness do not allow him to discern the truth and value the honesty of Cordelia expressed through blunt words, and does not let him see through the dishonesty of Regan and Goneril who use flattering words to receive a greater share.

Unable to see his masculine arrogance being hurt and feeling insecure to lose his authority and royal pride, Lear banishes Cordelia, trying to get rid of the source that has hurt his ego, rendered him impotent, powerless, and insecure. Even Lear’s question as to “which of you shall we say doth love us most” 1.1, shows his egoism, requiring flattering words over real love, seeing through the faithfulness and fidelity of Cordelia.

He leaves everything to Regan and Goneril, and losing his palace which is an emblem of his pride and vanity, he clings to his army of knights as the last discernible traces of his kingly possessions. His sense of identity defined through his possessions is shattered when Regan and Goneril order the disbanding of his army and later desert him. Having lost his identity, Lear is now a commoner whose kingly pride and possessions have deserted him. He has become aware of his wrong judgment, but still cannot swallow his pride and assume responsibility for his faults.

Having been stripped of his possessions and identity, Lear, unconsciously pretends to be mad in order to salvage his pride unaware that through disguise he merely deludes himself into believing that he is still a mighty king. The moment Lear sees the truth behind everything, he decides to deny such awareness by saying: “I have full cause of weeping, but this heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad” (II, 4).

⁶³ G.K. Gresseth, *The System of Aristotle's Poetics*, Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association. 89 (1958) 312-335.

⁶⁴ G.M. Kirkwood, *Hamartia: Tragic Error in the Poetics of Aristotle and in Greek Tragedy* by J. M. Bremer, *The American Journal of Philology*. 92(4) (1971) 711-715.

Insanity is the means through which Lear makes an attempt at the evaporation of self so as not to see and not to be seen. Lear's hamartia stems from his inability to strike a balance between his volatile temperament and his arrogant manner as a king. The supreme arrogance fills Lear with uncontrollable seething rage and prevents him from making accurate judgments. This lack of moderation is also the reason behind his insanity which deters him from appearing normal and acting sensibly. On the heath, in the storm, Lear confronts natural justice while being exposed to the elements. Despite acting insanelly, Lear is aware he is being punished by nature for his mistakes; he displays modesty to some extent and attempts to forget his arrogance by tearing his clothes which symbolize his divine power. He is no more a man of great wrath and pride, but a commoner. But Lear realizes the true nature of affairs, swallows his pride, and acknowledges his faults when it is too late. Lear realizes the true meaning of pride, kingly wrath, and moderation when he loses his daughter. In the end, Lear has grandeur not the sheer arrogance of a dictator; he is now a fit king to rule but it is too late, since his hubris destroyed not only his life, and maybe the most touching scene in all Shakespeare's plays is when he holds dead Cordelia in his arms, and later dies. This was the terrible result Lear's hamartia.

Richard - Richard III is a man of high stature, a king, who suffers a downfall due to his persistence to "prove a villain" (1.1.30). Furthermore, Richard III's tragic flaws are also the result of tragic conditions: Physical deformity and verbal abuse, or hatred from family and peers.

Richard III himself acknowledges that he is not a villain and his opening soliloquy in the play establishes the framework to view him as a tragic hero. Instead of being a villain, Richard III is a tragic hero whose hamartia is his very desire to transform himself into a "villain" in the action sense of the term, by committing violent actions.

Beside his hunchback, we can see a lot of examples of verbal abuses: In Act I, Scene II, Anne calls Richard a "fiend", a "devil", a "minister of hell", "foul devil", "thou lump of foul deformity", "cursed self", "hedgehog", "fouler toad", and tells him he is "unfit for any place, but hell" and that he "dost infect mine eyes". She also tells him to "hang himself". Since characters such as Anne exert so much hatred towards him, Richard III knows that he cannot "prove a lover" and must, instead, fulfill his goals by villainous means (1.1). Queen Margaret and the Duchess of York also insult him. Queen Margaret calls Richard III an "elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog" by Queen Margaret, which is one of the most severe and demeaning insults in the entire play (1.3). In Act One, Scene Three, Queen Margaret also calls Richard III a "devil", and a "murderous villain", as well as a "dog". She also tells him he is "the slave of nature and the son of hell". These comments of Queen Margaret are not only severe insults, but also ridicule Richard III's deformity. Richard III already feels "cheated...by...Nature," and insults directed at his deformity only add to his bitterness and desire "to prove a villain" and compensate for his physical deficiencies (1.1). Richard III's own mother, the Duchess of York insults and curses him. The Duchess of York calls Richard III an "ill-dispersing wind of misery" (4.1.) and calls her womb "accursed" (4.1.). She curses Richard III that "bloody will be thy end" (4.4.).

It is also important to note that all of the characters who throw insults at Richard III are women; thus, Richard III's claim that he "cannot prove a lover" does have some validity since he does not seem to find favor with women.

Richard III's tragic flaw, which is the result of both his deformity and bitterness, can best be described as the "overprizing of the intellectual above the moral character"⁶⁵. Richard III, in other words, makes up for his physical deformity with his intellectual superiority, his great oratory. Over the course of his quest to "prove a villain" and become King, Richard III commits many evil actions—he murders many of his relatives including his Lady Anne and Clarence, and marries his niece after murdering his first wife. These immoral actions lead critics into labeling Richard III as a villain. However, the murder of innocent characters is not an action unique to a tragic hero such as Richard III. He does commit many evil acts in the play, what does not hinder him from qualifying as an Aristotelian tragic hero.

Since we learn about Richard's disfigurement, feelings of pity arise, therefore forcing the audience to sympathize with Richard, blaming his projected evil acts of injustice on his sad inability to "prove a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days" 1.11. His intelligence, political brilliance, and dazzling use of language keep the audience fascinated, and his subjects and rivals under his thumb.

Romeo- Romeo and Juliet is probably Shakespeare's most well known play, and Romeo is probably one of Shakespeare's most famous protagonists. Romeo falls deeply and madly in love the first time he sees Juliet, the

⁶⁵ Barnet, Sylvan. "Coleridge on Shakespeare's Villains." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 7.1 (1956): 9-20. JSTOR Arts & Sciences. Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia. 7 November 2007, p.19

daughter of his father's sworn enemy. In fact, Romeo is often looked upon as the ultimate romantic: willing to put aside the feud between his and Juliet's family in the name of true love. But most people often overlook the tragic consequences of his actions: both he and Juliet end the play dead by their own hands.

Romeo's fatal flaw is his impulsiveness, his rashness of action before thinking thoroughly. We can find a lot of examples of this behavior. At the start of "Romeo and Juliet," Romeo is in love with another woman, Rosaline. In his mind, he and Rosaline are destined for each other and in "true love." But it takes only one night at the Capulet's ball for Romeo to forget all about Rosaline and fall in love with Juliet. He swears his love for Juliet during the balcony scene, and asks her to marry him, so after only one night together, Romeo impulsively marries Juliet, lying to the friar implying that he had sex with her the night before. The friar then felt obligated to "erase" that sin by marrying them after the fact (as well as to end the feud), which is followed by a chain of events. Shortly later in the wedding, he impulsively slays Juliet's cousin Tybalt in a fit of anger, knowing that he might get executed, but gets banished from Verona.

Juliet makes a plan to be reunited with her love by faking her own death. Unfortunately, Romeo's final act of impulsivity is to rush to Juliet's tomb before receiving the letter telling him that her death was faked. When he arrives there, he meets Paris, whom he impulsively kills. Thus, by rushing headlong into every action without thinking of any consequence, Romeo seals their fate. He kills himself though he should have realized that Juliet was alive. After two days, Juliet should not have still had rosy lips and supple flesh. Romeo notices this, but cannot figure out that she must be alive. He rashly poisons himself though she awakened within minutes. So we can see clear examples of how Romeo's impetuosity, his rashness of action before thinking thoroughly, led him to his destruction.

Hamlet -Hamlet is perhaps the greatest example of a Shakespearean hero. He is the young prince of Denmark whose uncle has killed his father, married his mother and took the throne. In his attempt to revenge his father's death, he pretends to be mad, he goes through a lot of difficulties, and he makes a lot of mistakes. One of Hamlet's tragic flaw is that he cannot act on impulse for things that require quick, decisive behavior, and that he acts on impulse for things that require more contemplation than is given by him. He even has a soliloquy about his indecision, "to be or not to be",

To be, or not to be- that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them. To die- to sleep-

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to,

where he expresses his dilemmas, and later he even speaks of his father's tragic flaw that ultimately led him to his death, but it applies equally well to himself, and not denying his own tragic flaw. Anytime that Hamlet has to act on something, such as when he has the opportunity to kill Claudius in the church while he was praying, he stops to think before he acts. The thinking eventually leads him to doubt, which leads him to inaction. Hamlet speaks of his inability to take action, his tragic flaw: "*Thus conscience does make cowards of us all; And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, And enterprises of great pitch and moment With this regard their currents turn awry And lose the name of action.*" (3.1.83-88). He is aware of his own flaw and knows how it has affected his relationship with Ophelia also. Another example of when Hamlet cannot act on impulse is in act 3, 2, in the play within a play scene, when he puts on a play to try to show proof to the rest of the court that Claudius murdered his father, since he could not act on the ghost's words alone. It would have been easier if Hamlet did not let Claudius understand that he knows who murdered his father. Similarly, Hamlet acts without rational thought in a couple of other scenes throughout the play. In Act 1, 4 Hamlet threatens Horatio and Marcellus to let him go so he can follow the ghost. He does not have a rational thought about it. He simply follows the ghost even with Horatio trying to talk him out of it. Another example to support Hamlet's irrational acts is when he is in the Queen's chambers in Act 3, 4 when he stabs Polonius through the arras, without knowledge of who it is. As soon as he hears something behind the arras, he draws his sword and says "How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead!" (3.4.23-24) and stabs through the arras killing Polonius. It is this action, taken without thought, which ultimately seals Hamlet's fate, since it is the moment of hamartia, which results in later disaster, a horrible mistake, which if followed by a series of tragic events that take place because of it. Hamlet's obsessive pursuit to avenge his father's death causes him to become careless because of his blind passion. His heated obsession forces him to react in haste, which results in the

death of an innocent man. However, Hamlet had many opportunities to kill Claudius, but did not take advantage of them. He also had the option to tell the public that his father died by Claudius' hand. Yet he did neither. He did neither because his tragic flaw kept him from achieving his goals. That is until the end. In the end after he realizes that his death is imminent and Claudius caused the death of his mother, he lets his anger overcome him. . And while Hamlet does ultimately get his revenge against his uncle, his procrastination leads to not only his own death but the death of his mother and Ophelia along the way as well. The play ends in a real bloodbath, when eight of its characters die violently. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* successfully reveals catharsis and hamartia through Hamlet's indecision, and by highlighting the tragic losses he endures because of the unfair death of his father.

Macbeth – Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's finest tragic heroes. He is a great warrior, who surrenders to his ambition, which is his fatal flaw. From the start of the play, we see that he desires much more than his current position. It begins when he encounters three witches who foretell of his destined greatness, and after discovering that one of their prophecies has come true, he's determined to do everything to take the Scottish throne. In fact, Macbeth is mostly influenced by Lady Macbeth's ambition, since she is more ambitious and 'feeds' Macbeth's ambition even more. Allowing Lady Macbeth manipulate with his ambitious desires is in fact another very important of his faults. Macbeth's desire to be king gets so strong that he believes that the ambiguous prophecy of the witches means that he is destined to be king, as soon as possible. Thus, he is willing to do anything to achieve this goal and any cost, including killing the king he serves, and other innocent people.

MACBETH [aside]

*The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires.
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (1.4.55-60)*

Macbeth describes his ambition as being "black and deep desires," but later, when the witches tell him that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth," he begins to think he's immortal. His very ambition and the murderous way that he earned the kingship, immediately lead to his crippling paranoia. He assumes all those around him suffer from the same ambition he himself feels. He constantly sees knives around every corner and mistrust in the eyes of all those around him. This paranoia leads to him isolating himself by killing his greatest ally, Banquo. At the witches' behest, he then seeks out to kill MacDuff, his greatest rival, but by killing MacDuff's family, he ultimately draws the attention and anger of MacDuff, the only man that, according to the witches, can kill him, and who eventually kills him.

Besides being ambitious, Macbeth is very proud as well, which is another of his faults. Firstly, there are sparkles of Macbeth's pride as husband, when he calls his wife "dearest partner of greatness" 1.5, and as a subject, when he tells Duncan "the loyalty I owe, in doing it, pays itself." 1.4. He also uses the royal "we" when he speaks of "our innocent self" in Act 1, and again when he flatters his guests in Act 3.4: "Ourself will mingle with society and play the humble host." We see that kingly pride rules him entirely.

Once the witches pronounce that "none of woman born" can hurt him, Macbeth's pride in his supposed supernatural powers infects his very sanity. Harold Bloom says that Macbeth has the self-pride to defy all nature. Certainly Macbeth imagines his immortal nature with pure hubris, which Aristotle considered a god-defying pride. Aristotelian hubris in a tragic hero gives way to catharsis, the emotional cleansing that ends a tragedy, and here Macbeth achieves a dignified, human sense of pride. At the end, defeated and hopeless, he announces to Macduff that "I will not yield.... / Yet will I try the last.... / Lay on, Macduff, and damn'd be him that first cries hold, enough!" 5.7. In this remarkable pronouncement, his last words, Macbeth recovers his pride both as man and warrior, declares his ability to fight in the face of despair and takes away any chance of shame and surrender.

We can notice that Shakespeare has manifested glimpses of several kinds of pride in the character of Macbeth: the hubris that first hurls us into sin and error, the false pride that keeps us secure in our evil, and finally the recovering, human pride of self in the face of death, our ultimate redemption.

Othello- Othello is a specific character not only in Shakespeare's tragedies, but in English literature in general, since he is the first and probably the only dark-skin major character. Despite rampant racism in Venice, Othello has become a general and has won the heart of Desdemona, who elopes with him. He has been experienced in war and adventure, and that is how he wins her love. The duke of Venice holds him in trust and respect.

However, like all great tragic heroes, Othello too has flaws, he is quite naïve trusting others too easily, loves Desdemona blindly and is very jealous and irrationally quick in his wrong judgments and actions. These flaws, along with Iago's manipulations, lead Othello towards his tragic end. It is clear that his jealousy results from other things too, such as low self-esteem, probably due to the racism he's faced, rather than an innate character trait. He simply places all his trust in the wrong man, Iago, and we can understand his mistake, since it is a man whom he fought with and, therefore, had to trust with his life, and also entrusts his wife to Iago saying, "To his conveyance I assign my wife." (1.3.286), considering him a real friend. His 'friend' Iago, constantly puts venomous words into Othello's ears, making him believe in Desdemona's infidelity. Thus, Othello's 'error of judgment' lies in his wrong understanding of innocent people like his wife as guilty, and believing villains like Iago. As a complex character, Othello is noble, but turns out to be a disgusting rascal. In the beginning, we see Othello reasonable, patient and noble. He faces the anger of Brabantio calmly like a general, and ignores when Iago provokes him against Desdemona's father.

However, Iago begins to break down Othello's self-control by talking of jealousy: "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy. It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock The meat it feeds on." (3.3.178-179). Othello's loss of control is clearly seen when he asks for the handkerchief, a sign of Desdemona's love, which she cannot, since Iago took it for his manipulation. As a military man, Othello considers himself as a man who judges by the fact: "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; and on the proof, there is no more but this – Away at once with love or jealousy." (3.3.204-206)

Othello loves his wife extremely, excessively, but "not wisely ..." (5.2.554). Throughout the play Othello professes his love to Desdemona. In Act III Scene III, obviously the most important scene in the play, Othello lets Desdemona know that "I will deny thee nothing." (3.3). By this Othello is letting Desdemona know that there is nothing he wouldn't do for her. At the end of the play when Othello kills Desdemona, and he learns the truth about her, he says, "I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this, / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss." (5.2.369-370) He shows everyone that he truly did love his wife even in death.

The change in Othello from the romantic and successful man into the pathetic schizoid (a psychological patient, who thinks of himself as two or more people) and a miserable and lonely outcast is remarkable

It is too late when he realizes what he has done. His "honest" Iago has made him blind and he knows he is now, a damned fool remembering "he that was Othello". The awakened, broken-hearted Othello rouses more anger than pity and fear at the end, realizing his crime and committing suicide.

We saw that each of Shakespeare's tragic characters has their own specific fatal flaw. But like with the examples above, each flaw is just a normal human trait taken to its extreme. They are all heroes, but also sinners and people who become murderers. They are all specific characters, but also have some similarities. We notice that Romeo rushes into decisions too quickly, Hamlet is indecisive and unable to commit to a course of action. While Romeo never stops to think of the consequences of his actions, Hamlet always experiences overthinking, and King Lear is also very quick with his decision about Cordelia. Deformity of Richard and the race of Othello make them get deep into their tragic flaw, Macbeth on the other hand doesn't want his pride to be hurt so succumbs to Lady Macbeth words about manhood, and King Lear is also very proud as we know. Women have a great part in their lives, or better to say in their downfall. They become a part of their heroes' tragic whirlwind and ended tragically, no matter if they were innocent (Desdemona gets killed by Othello, Ophelia gets mad and commits a suicide, Cordelia gets executed) or they pushed the heroes of the plays into the tragic path (Lady Macbeth feeds Macbeth ambition, Goneril flatters her father and is part of evil plots in the play, etc). Additionally, Hamlet's lack of commitment can also be seen in his relationship with Ophelia, whom Shakespeare implies Hamlet has "tumbled" with no intention of then wedding her. Almost all of them get affected by madness, whether pretended, like King Lear and Hamlet, or being at the verge of real madness like Macbeth, Othello and Richard. Their psychological state is obviously a part of their downfall and tragedy, but eventually, all of them get aware of their mistakes and faults, and realize that no one else is responsible for their tragic fate but them themselves, but it is too late. Bes

Through his tragedies, Shakespeare sought to shine a light on the human condition and show how every day emotions and personality traits could, when taken to the extreme, lead to our own downfall. However, if we keep all things, including our impulsiveness, indecisiveness, and ambition, to a minimum, we'll be just fine

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