

## The Complexities of Mathilda's Character as a Tragic Heroine in *Mathilda* by Mary Shelley

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the character complexities of Mathilda as a tragic heroine, the main character in Mary Shelley's *Mathilda*, from the beginning until the end of the story. To achieve the aim of this research, the researchers use data collection and the novella *Mathilda* to analyze Mathilda's character. The approach for this research is psychoanalytic, theory of character and characterization, personality, and psychological process. The analysis shows that Mathilda is a complex tragic heroine who yearns for both affection and tragic death. Her experiences of unrequited parental affection and emotional turmoil contribute to her portrayal as a tragic character. However, her longing for her idealized tragic fate remains unfulfilled, adding complexity to her character. Despite her desires, she cannot obtain the tragic ending she seeks, further highlighting the tragic irony of her situation. Mathilda's portrayal as a tragic character highlights the depths of her desires and yearning and the complexities of her character.

**Keywords:** *characterization, complexities, Mathilda, tragic heroine.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Mathilda* is a novella by one of the best Romantic British Novelists and the author of *Frankenstein*, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, also known as Mary Shelley. This particular work caught the researcher's eye from the plots' merits to the character's characterization. Mathilda tried to end her life along with her friend she made after moving to a house in the hearth with a maid to take care of the house, Woodville, who just lost his betrothed. Yet, Mathilda stopped her action after Woodville decided to leave her and returned and nursed his ill mother. She became confused and did not know what to do and chose to let herself become sickly until death arrived. What exactly is she confused about? Is it possible that

her friend's departure is the last straw that pushes her to end her life? Or she can see it as a sign to keep moving on with her life, but she chooses neither and keeps on living until death finally decides to visit her. In the end, she realizes that she can't live any longer, but she doesn't choose anything to keep moving on or to end her own life.

Rather than deciding after Woodville leaves her, Mathilda loses her ways and does not know what to do. Then came a question.

1. Does the image of a tragic heroine fit Mathilda?
2. How can we describe Mathilda's tendency to romanticize herself as a tragic heroine?

The researchers observes the story from the beginning until the end to thoroughly study each

character and the writer's choice of words. It is important to note that this narrative is conveyed from a first-person point of view, with Mathilda herself composing a letter addressed to her friend, Woodville. This information helps us rely on Mathilda's perspective as the story's character and storyteller from her eyes.

The discussion ends with her development throughout the story with moral ambiguity and a tragic heroine that is highlighted in Mathilda's character. The researchers hope they can describe the complexity of Mathilda's character is, who is already tragic but obsessed with her ideal version of a tragic heroine, and her achievement in the embodiment of the innocent image of a "tragic heroine."

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several studies conducted previously which surround the ambiguity of Mathilda's character in this story. Melany Moore wrote in 2011 a paper entitled *Mary Shelley's "Mathilda" and the Struggle for Female Narrative Subjectivity*. In the paper she stressed Shelley's distance from her protagonist. She also argued that she does not seem to "like" this "substantially flawed" heroine who carelessly blurs the lines between fiction and reality (Moore 2011, p.77). This reading of "Mathilda" as a dramatic actress who feigns passivity to control the other players in her script is especially suggestive in the context of a tradition of female gothic heroines who passively triumph over masculine evil (Moore 2011). In the story, no such masculine evil needs to be defeated, only a devastated father with feelings for his daughter. He is not evil, and he never forces his feelings. The feelings were accidentally confessed because he could not hold back his jealousy towards the other men who wanted his daughter after he confessed, he preferred to kill himself because he knew how wrong it was.

Bunnel (1997) wrote a paper entitled *"Mathilda": Mary Shelley's Romantic Tragedy*. In the paper Bunnel suggested that Mathilda constructs her autobiography as a dramatic tragedy that reveals an egocentric view of life as a stage on which she, a tragic actress, performs the leading role of an incest

victim (Bunnel, 1997). Bunnel mentioned that "All the world's a stage" may be the perfect metaphor for Mathilda's situation. However, when the metaphor loses its analogic function, so does Mathilda's purpose, and the results can be disastrous. At the end of the story, her friend, Woodville, who promised her to commit suicide together since he shares the same misery with her, just lost his fiance and left her due to his mother's illness. This is something out of Mathilda's prediction; if she wanted to end her life, Woodville's absence could be the last straw for her, but the reality speaks otherwise.

The current analysis considers previous works by Moore and Bunnel to identify research gaps and enhance the findings of this study. Unlike earlier research, this paper primarily focuses on the complex depiction of Mathilda as a tragic heroine.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Psychoanalytic Approach

Sigmund Freud's studies centered on how the human mind functions. His study techniques ultimately came to be known as "psychoanalysis." According to Freud, human conduct is built upon internal wants, memories, repressions, and unconscious ideas (Freud, 1915). His approach is used in literature to analyze characters and character decisions; this study is called "psychoanalytic criticism." Whether poetry or prose, every work of literature involves characters with goals. A chance to find and examine those reasons is presented by a psychoanalytic critique, which contributes to a fuller comprehension of the whole work. (Motivations may be sexual, sexually motivated, fear-driven, or unconscious) (1935).

### Theory of Character and Characterization

Character, a fundamental element in fiction, is defined by Abrams (1999) as an individual possessing intellectual, emotional, and moral attributes. Forster (1927) distinguishes two types of characters: flat characters, easily understood with one defining quality, and round characters, complex and capable of surprising the reader. Major characters play significant roles throughout the plot, engaging in crucial actions, while minor characters support the main characters' positions.

Henkle (1977) emphasizes that major characters deserve the reader's attention and play a crucial role in expressing and convincing the novel's themes. According to Abcarian (1998), characterization is essential for bringing characters to life. Abrams (1999) outlines two methods of characterization: displaying, where characters' actions and dialogue reveal their nature, and telling, where the author directly informs readers about the characters.

Roger B. Henkle (1977) offers nine approaches to characterization, utilizing different angles. Appearance, speech, dialogue with other characters, a character's former life, reactions to situations, thoughts, mannerisms, another character's influence, and direct comments are various methods authors employ to shape and define characters. These multifaceted approaches contribute to the richness and depth of fictional characters, allowing readers to engage with and understand them on different levels.

### **Personality and Psychological Approach**

Personality, according to Sigmund Freud, is formed early in life, mainly when it is influenced by our experiences with need and pleasure (in Mark Parkinson, 2004:9). There are three degrees of awareness in a person's existence, according to Freud (in Alwisol, 2005:17): conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Until the 1920s, the notion of the psyche's struggle covered only those three aspects. Freud identified three further structural models in 1923: Id, Ego, and Super Ego. This new structure did not replace the previous one but rather completed the mental image by emphasizing function and purpose (Alwisol, 2005:17).

The psychological approach is a literary criticism technique that focuses on a literary work's psychological components (Atar Semi, 2013:45). These psychological components have attracted attention in literary criticism and research as a result of the rise of consciousness for both the author and the critic. In today's world, society's development and advancement are measured in material terms and spiritual and psychological dimensions. Many authors employ this principle in literature by focusing on relevant and pure parts when studying someone's characteristics and personality.

### **Morally Ambiguous Characters**

The Morally Ambiguous Characters are not simply heroes or villains. They fall somewhere in between and add depth and complexity to the story. The truth is that most humans in real life are not pure angels or simply bad people but rather hold elements of both. Based on the claim, combining both can be complex and complicated. Sometimes, it can contrast, and sometimes it can be subtle (WriteAway 2021).

Whereas Eden et al. (2011) and Tamborini et al. (2010) investigated morality as a unitary notion, Krakowiak and Oliver (2012) and Eden et al. (2015) provide evidence that ethically ambiguous character judgments are multidimensional rather than one-dimensional. As a result, a morally ambiguous figure may exhibit positive and negative moral features. In contrast, a less morally ambiguous character (i.e., a stereotypical hero or villain) would exhibit moral consistency over a wide range of domains, being either all good or all terrible (in Eden et al., 2016).

In the research *Moral Ambiguity in Dostoevski* by R.M. Davison in 1968, he stated, "The notion is a more subtle and far-reaching version of the common view that things are not necessarily what they seem to be. It says that situations and actions are neutral and meaningless; we impose any value or meaning. Expressed thus, moral ambiguity seems a rarefied concept, but in Dostoevski's hands, it becomes a vivid, if still confusing, reality. It is best illustrated at first by specific and limited incidents." (Davidson 1968, p.313) Davison mentioned that the moral ambiguity seemed a vivid thing or something more straightforward to see yet still confusing.

Characters who are morally ambiguous are those who are neither heroes nor villains. They fall somewhere in the middle and, as such, add depth and complexity to the story. Morally ambiguous characters can drive the plot in novel ways, allow for significant character growth, and sometimes become some of the most memorable characters in a book or film (servicescape.com).

### **Tragic Heroes**

A Tragic hero is the protagonist of a tragic story or drama in which, despite their moral and sympathetic qualities and desires, they eventually face defeat, suffering, or even an untimely death. They are

frequently defective or damaged by a traumatic experience, and they almost always have a fatal weakness. (studiobinder.com)

In Joseph Kelly's words (in Capanna, Sarra: 2014), a tragic hero is defined as someone who begins in a prosperous position, comes into contact with a power far more prominent than himself, and ultimately experiences a terrible reversal. In other words, the hero descends from a position of prosperity to one of poverty. The hero should evoke feelings of pity and empathy in the viewer. They should recognize themselves in the hero's tribulations. Finally, the most noticeable aspect of a tragic hero is his tragic weakness. This is something about his personality destined to be the basis of his demise.

In Dutta (2017), *Aristotle's Concept of a Tragic Hero in his Poetics*. Characteristics of a Tragic Hero, Aristotle defines a Tragic Hero as "a person who must evoke a sense of pity and fear in the audience. He is considered a man of misfortune that comes to him through the error of judgment." The heroes' tragic downfall evokes pity and fear among the audience.

## METHODS

### Literary Study

The methodology of literary study is to read, analyze, and sort literature to find the fundamental characteristics of materials. The researcher analyzes the novel, so that it enables the researcher to contextualize and connect between materials that have been gathered. There are other articles and readings from many sources to widen the researcher's perspective, line up the researcher's argument, and not only see the question from one eye.

### Collecting Data

The data are collected in the form of lines from the novella *Mathilda* and related articles. The data that have been collected will be used as evidence while analyzing the data. The passages from the novella *Mathilda* will not be the only data used. Data from

other sources will help the researcher compose and organize all the information for the research.

### Analysing and Evidence

In this step, the researcher examines the evidence gathered during the data collection phase. This involves an analysis of the various pieces of evidence, which may include textual excerpts, thematic elements, character developments, and narrative techniques found in Mary Shelley's "Mathilda." Each piece of evidence is linked to relevant data and theoretical frameworks to provide an understanding of the literary work. By doing so, the researcher aims to construct logical and convincing arguments that highlight the intricate connections within the text. This process will ultimately lead to well-founded conclusions that offer deeper insights into the themes, motifs, and literary significance of the novella "Mathilda."

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Contradictions and The Parallels in The Characters

Mathilda's Father is initially seen as a poetic and captivating figure through Mathilda's adoring eyes. She idolizes him and longs for his affection. However, as Mathilda's narrative unfolds, we discover that her father is a complex individual deeply affected by the loss of Mathilda's mother. He hides his genuine emotions, leading to inner turmoil. He had done everything to pursue his love for Diana, but her untimely death shatters his happiness. Over time, he developed illicit emotions towards his daughter that is still unbeknownst to Mathilda. As he witnessed her engaging with potential suitors, jealousy consumed him, leading to a gradual withdrawal and an increasingly aggressive demeanor to maintain distance between them. The contrast between Mathilda's initial adoration and the revelation of her father's emotional struggles creates a poignant and complex portrayal of this character.

Mathilda's Mother, Diana, is mainly characterized by Mathilda's father's perspective and the memories inherited by Mathilda. She is depicted

as possessing a pure heart, humility, and intellectual allure. Her presence shapes Mathilda's father's character and inspires him to lead a more purposeful life. However, Diana remains somewhat distant, her essence conveyed through fragmented memories and the lingering impact she had on Mathilda's father. Mathilda's mother is never fully portrayed as an individual character; instead, she exists as a reenactment based on Mathilda's father's knowledge of her since Mathilda never had the chance to meet her in person. This contrast between the idealized portrayal and the absence of a direct, present presence creates a bittersweet depiction of Diana.

Mathilda's Aunt initially has a limited presence in Mathilda's memories. When she does enter the story, their relationship is cold and distant. The aunt takes care of Mathilda out of obligation rather than genuine concern, displaying an unfeeling and strict demeanor. This strained connection contributes to Mathilda's sense of isolation and self-reliance. While her aunt may not have possessed a natural inclination for affection or the ability to express it in conventional ways, there is underlying care and concern that her aunt held for her well-being. Besides her aunt's cold-hearted attitude, a sense of duty and responsibility guided her actions, and she had made efforts to provide Mathilda with a stable upbringing, albeit within the constraints of her limitations. Yet, the need for affection from children still stands, and she cannot fulfill it at the end of the day. The initial omission of Mathilda's aunt in her memories had some contrasts with the later depiction of their strained and distant relationship, underscoring the complexities of family dynamics.

Woodville, a poet whom Mathilda encounters during a period of deep despair, initially shares her anguish. They contemplate ending their lives together, but their plans are interrupted by his mother's illness. Through caring for his mother, Woodville experiences a transformative change in perspective and discovers a renewed sense of purpose. This shift in his outlook and focus on responsibility contrasts starkly with his initial shared grief with Mathilda, adding depth and growth to his character.

Woodville's Fiancée, Elinor, is introduced as a beautiful young heiress with noble values, making her appear as a perfect match for Woodville. Their

union promises unblemished happiness and harmony. However, in the end, Elinor left the man whom she loves and who loves her due to her illness.

Chapter I introduces Mathilda's father and Diana's relationship, painting a picture of their intense connection. The subsequent chapters then unfold Mathilda's journey of self-discovery and her struggle to reconcile her desires and emotions with the romantic ideals ingrained within her. This exploration is further expanded in Chapter IX, where the love story of Woodville and Elinor takes center stage, providing a contrasting perspective to Mathilda's own experiences. Through these interconnected love stories and the careful construction of character names, the narrative invites us to reflect on the complexities of human relationships, the dangers of idealization, and grief over our beloved ones can be a dangerous notion in human nature.

### The Significance of Names

One notable aspect of this story is the significance of the characters' names. These names often serve as symbols or representations of the characters themselves. In Mathilda's tale, only four names are mentioned, each with significance and meaning. The first name introduced is Woodvilles, the name of her only friend. The next name is her mother's name, Diana. The final name mentioned is Elinor, Woodville's fiancé.

Two of the names represent death, while the other name signifies someone who shares Mathilda's experience of loss. The two names that represent death are Diana and Elinor. Diana is Mathilda's mother, whose name is often associated with death in mythology and literature, Whereas Elinor is Woodville's fiancé, who also represents death in the context of the story.

This careful selection of names adds depth to the narrative, conveying additional layers of meaning and reinforcing the story's themes.

Interestingly, she never even mentioned her family's or her father's name, especially when her father is a man of rank. This could be interpreted as a reflection of Mathilda's complex relationship with her father and her desire to distance herself from the painful memories associated with him. By not naming her father, Shelley as the writer might be

emphasizing Mathilda's struggle with her identity and the societal expectations placed upon her.

Terence Harpold's study, *"Did You Get Mathilda from Papa?": Seduction Fantasy and the Circulation of Mary Shelley's "Mathilda"* in 1989 extensively discusses the treatment of Mathilda's mother in the story. Harpold highlights that Mathilda consistently refers to her mother not as "mother" but as "Diana," emphasizing the significance of names. It draws attention to Mathilda's consistent use of the name "Diana" when referring to her mother rather than the more intimate term "mother." This emphasis on names underscores their significance in understanding their relationship dynamics. Since Mathilda began viewing her mother not as her "Mother" but as "Diana" whom her father loved deeply.

Diana, Woodville, and Elinor are the only names that have appeared more than once. They act as more supporting characters than just background characters like Mark and Gaspal, who only appear when Mathilda calls out for them to help her look for her father. The rest of the name holds a significant aspect.

The significance of names and their parallels in Mathilda's narrative is explored in Chapter I and Chapter IX, which focus on two distinct love stories. Diana and Elinor, the female characters, are portrayed as having similar qualities and experiences. Diana has a pure heart, intellectual charm, and a strong sense of integrity. Elinor, similarly, is characterized as generous and honorable and possesses a blend of intuition and intelligence. Both love stories promise happiness and fulfillment.

The repeated presence of these names suggests a thematic connection between characters and their intertwined destinies. The author intentionally highlights the shared traits and interconnectedness of these individuals. In contrast, lesser-developed characters like Mark and Gaspal play supporting roles without significantly impacting the overarching story. The exploration of names and their parallels adds a layer of meaning to Mathilda's narrative, emphasizing the importance of these characters in shaping her experiences and emotional journey.

This deliberate naming strategy provides insight into the author's thematic exploration of love,

loss, and the complexities of human relationships. By presenting parallel love stories through these different characters, the narrative raises questions about the nature of love, its transformative power, and the consequences of idealizing or romanticizing certain relationships.

### **Mathilda as a Tragic Heroine**

The study of characters and their decisions in literature encompasses various perspectives and approaches. In the case of Mathilda, her portrayal as a tragic heroine is strengthened by the understanding that unfulfilled basic needs can lead to complex problems, as demonstrated through the character of Iona from Anton Chekhov's story, *Misery*. This imbalance between Iona's needs and desires highlights the unconsciousness that arises when basic needs are neglected, providing a lens through which to analyze Mathilda's struggles. Based on Forster (1927), with her imbalance of needs and desires, her struggles in living her life highlight how much of a round character she is, affected by the environments and the people around her, shaping her perspective and view of her surroundings.

Furthermore, the psychological components and principles of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis come into play, offering a deeper understanding of Mathilda's motivations and internal conflicts. Freud's concept of psychoanalytic criticism allows us to explore Mathilda's character and the intricate layers of her psyche, shedding light on her desires, memories, and unconscious ideas.

In addition, the exploration of moral ambiguity, as discussed in R.M. Davison's research on Dostoevski, enhances our understanding of Mathilda's character. We gain insight into the complexities of Mathilda's decisions and actions. Her moral ambiguity is exemplified by her introspective narrative and relationships, challenging conventional notions of right and wrong and adding depth to her tragic journey.

Her longing for affection from her early years ended with her father's death after accidentally confessing his feelings to her. Adding to the coldness and the absence of warm, loving affections of her aunt, Mathilda lived and had to learn she was the cause of her mother's death, with guilt and desires to be loved piled year after year, only to get pressed

down her father's feeling of loss of her mother, pushing his sadness to her while she still recovering from her aunt's death, pushing her into thinking how miserable her life is, to lose such a wonderful mother whom she never met. While her father slowly gained illicit feelings toward his daughter, yet he never pushed or forced his way through it; instead, when he accidentally let his feelings known, he preferred to end his life. Her only friend left her after the promise of ending their somber life together. Adding the depth of Mathilda's loss.

Despite the events that unfolded in Mathilda's life, she hasn't entirely embraced the role of a tragic heroine. According to Joseph Kelly's explanation of a tragic hero (as cited in Capanna, 2014), a tragic hero typically begins in a prosperous position, encounters a more powerful force, and ultimately undergoes a severe reversal—descending from prosperity to poverty. However, Mathilda's circumstances don't align with this model, as she isn't transitioning from prosperity to poverty.

A tragic hero is also portrayed as a protagonist with moral qualities who faces defeat, suffering, or untimely death. These heroes often bear flaws or scars from traumatic experiences and a fatal weakness. In Mathilda's case, her character does not fully conform to the tragic hero archetype outlined in this definition. (Literary Devices, n.d.)

Moreover, Dutta (2017) investigated *Aristotle's Concept of a Tragic Hero in his Poetics: Characteristics of a Tragic Hero*, defining such a hero as someone who must evoke pity and fear in the audience due to misfortune resulting from an error in judgment. The tragic downfall of these heroes is designed to elicit feelings of pity and fear among the audience.

Ultimately, despite Mathilda facing challenges and tribulations, her character does not align with the traditional characteristics of a tragic heroine. The absence of a profound downfall, coupled with the insufficient depth of misfortune and flaws, deviates from the expected traits outlined by various sources for a character to be classified as a tragic heroine. While fraught with difficulties, Mathilda's narrative lacks the essential elements that define a character as a tragic heroine in the literary context. This can be seen in the fact that Mathilda's struggles are deeply personal and introspective, focusing more on her

internal conflicts and less on the broader societal or moral implications. Moreover, the narrative does not emphasize a fatal flaw or a sense of inevitability that leads to her downfall, which are essential elements in the portrayal of a tragic heroine.

### **Mathilda's Tendency in Romanticizing Herself as Her Idealized Version of Tragic Heroine**

In the first chapter, we observe Mathilda's tendency to romanticize or idealize herself as a tragic heroine. She describes her solitary existence in a remote cottage on a desolate heath, emphasizing the bleakness and isolation of her surroundings. Mathilda remarks on the winter landscape, noting the absence of life and the coldness of the frost-covered ground. This portrayal sets the stage for her self-perception as a tormented figure.

Mathilda's state of mind is described as being in a "strange" and "alone" state. She believes that misfortune has befallen her, and she feels a sense of happiness and joy in the face of her impending death. This juxtaposition of despair and peculiar contentment reflects her inclination to view her tragic circumstances as extraordinary. She begins to write her tragic history, convinced that she will never experience another winter or summer. Mathilda sees her tale as one filled with mystic terrors and considers it unfit for expression during her lifetime. However, in the face of death, she feels compelled to share her story, even though she believes it should die with her.

Mathilda addresses her writing to a friend, Woodville, expressing gratitude for his friendship and anticipating his emotional response to her narrative. She believes others may read her account lightly, but she expects Woodville to cherish it as a testament to her heartbreak and misfortunes. Throughout this story, Mathilda narrates her life as a tragic tale, emphasizing her isolation, impending death, and the mystical and untold nature of her story. Her language and introspection reveal a desire to be seen as a figure worthy of sympathy and pity.

The depictions of each character provide valuable insights into their complexities, the limitations of perception, and the interplay between personal desires and external realities in Mathilda's world. The shifts in perception and the conflicts that arise within these relationships contribute to the



emotional depth and complexity of the story. Amidst the contributions of each character of Mathilda's father, mother, aunt, Woodville, and Elinor, we witness Mathilda's inclination to romanticize herself as part of a tragedy by shaping a scenario where she can end her life, completing the tragedy.

Through her introspective narrative, Mathilda often casts herself as the protagonist in a somber tale, weaving her personal experiences into a more dramatic, self-made tragedy, searching for the ultimate death or ending for her tragedy. In her mind, she is a misunderstood soul burdened by the weight of her emotions and losses, similar to the tragic figures she has encountered in literature and history. This tendency to romanticize her struggles serves as a coping mechanism for Mathilda, allowing her to find solace and purpose amidst her hardships.

However, this self-romanticization and the ideal picture of a tragic ending for herself also obscures Mathilda's perception of reality and distorts her understanding of the world around her. It is shown in the first way she introduces each of her characters, how she introduces her father as a loving, good-natured man who solely loves her mother, while throughout the story, we can see his love has turned into obsession over the loss of his lover. He even pushes Mathilda's grief over her aunt after her aunt's death, saying that nothing can compare to his heartbreaking moment when he lost her.

He often compares Mathilda with Diana, with whom he often talks. Slowly, he gazes at Mathilda as if he sees Diana through her and ends up growing illicit feelings toward her. However, he is not the antagonist of this story; as his feelings grow, he knows it is wrong and keeps it to himself. Only to end up for him to push Mathilda away rashly, while Mathilda is confused by her loving father's sudden change of demeanor.

Meanwhile, in Mathilda's aunt's case, she was described as someone who was truly cold, who never married, disliked children, and ended up caring for her the way other people in the same social status for 16 years, and she grew up as a lovely young maiden. Her mother is introduced as someone she has known for a long time, yet she only sees her through her father's eyes.

By romanticizing herself as the idealized version of her tragic ending, she often overlooks the

vastness of the world and the chances that lay around her. Her father's neglect and her mother's absence become integral components of her tragic narrative, rather than complex individuals with their struggles and shortcomings. Even her aunt, who has cared for her for 16 years, is reduced to a mere supporting character in Mathilda's grand tragedy.

The stark contrasts between the complexities of the other characters and Mathilda's first introductions of each character add another layer of depth to the narrative. It underscores the interplay between reality, imagination, and emotional resilience in Mathilda's world. While her romanticization may provide temporary comfort and a sense of purpose, it ultimately hinders her ability to fully engage with the world and form authentic connections.

In Chapters X and XI, Mathilda's manipulative behaviors are evident through her interactions with Woodville. After the death of his beloved Elinor, Woodville seeks solace in a secluded part of the country. Living alone in solitude, Mathilda initially resents his presence, fearing that her secrets and impostures might be discovered. However, she soon becomes intrigued by Woodville's conversation and poetic nature. She started getting close to him, portraying herself as a melancholic figure burdened with grief and tragedy. Mathilda maintains a constant air of sadness, captivating Woodville's sympathy and compassion. She revels in his attention yet remains guarded, withholding the true extent of her sufferings. She criticizes Woodville for not meeting her expectations and accuses him of causing her additional pain.

Mathilda manipulates him by alternating between vulnerability and rejection, causing him to doubt himself and question his actions with the test of friendship she proposed. Despite her emotional instability, Mathilda derives satisfaction from expressing her misery to him, even though she rejects any attempts at consolation. Ultimately, her manipulative tactics drive a wedge between them, straining their relationship and leading to further isolation and despair.

In summary, Mathilda's tendency to romanticize herself as part of an idealized version of her tragic ending shapes her perception of her own experiences and those around her. It serves as a



coping mechanism, offering solace and purpose amidst her hardships. However, this self-romanticization also distorts her understanding of reality, isolates her from others, and prevents genuine connections. The contrasting depictions of the other characters highlight the complexities of human relationships and serve as a counterpoint to Mathilda's idealized perception of herself. In her interactions with Woodville, her manipulative behaviors further isolate her and deepen her despair. Nevertheless, after all of that, in the end, her only friend, Woodville, who shares the same misery, could not end his life with her—resulting in her inability to achieve her ideal ending for her tragedy.

## CONCLUSION

The exploration of Mathilda's character reveals a multifaceted analysis that combines psychological, literary, and moral perspectives. Initially, her portrayal as a tragic figure draws upon the understanding that unfulfilled basic needs can lead to complex problems, as demonstrated through the character of Iona in Chekhov's "Misery." Mathilda's imbalance of needs and desires, shaping her as a round character influenced by her environment, is reminiscent of Forster's characterization in 1927. This establishes a foundation for understanding her struggles and provides a lens through which to view her subsequent actions and decisions. Applying Freud's psychoanalysis (1935) adds another layer to comprehend Mathilda's motivations and internal conflicts. By employing psychoanalytic criticism, we gain insight into the intricate layers of her psyche, shedding light on her desires, memories, and unconscious ideas. This psychological exploration enhances the depth of her character, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of her struggles and actions.

Additionally, examining moral ambiguity, as discussed in R.M. Davison's research on Dostoevski in 1968, contributes to the complexity of Mathilda's character. This lens provides insight into the ethical dimensions of her decisions, unraveling the intricacies of her moral landscape. The moral ambiguity in her relationships challenges

conventional notions of right and wrong, adding depth to her tragic journey.

Mathilda's narrative lacks the profound tragic downfall typically associated with such figures. In essence, despite Mathilda facing challenges and tribulations, her character does not align with the characteristics of a tragic heroine. While fraught with difficulties, Mathilda's narrative lacks the essential elements that define a character as a tragic heroine in the literary context. The absence of a profound downfall, coupled with the insufficient depth of misfortune and flaws, deviates from the expected traits outlined by various sources for a character to be classified as a tragic heroine.

Furthermore, Mathilda's tendency to romanticize herself as a part of a tragedy becomes a focal point in her introspective narrative. This inclination shapes her perception of her life, introducing a distortion that obscures the complexities of other characters. Her idealized tragic ending, driven by a series of losses and unfulfilled desires, creates a barrier to authentic connections and a genuine understanding of the world.

Mathilda's manipulative behaviors emerge in her interactions with Woodville. Oscillating between vulnerability and rejection, she drives a wedge between them, straining their relationship. Her manipulative tactics and emotional instability ultimately isolate her further, deepening her despair. This emphasizes the consequences of her tendency to manipulate situations to fit her tragic narrative, leading to further alienation.

In conclusion, the analysis of Mathilda's character integrates literary, psychological, and moral perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of her complexities. While she exhibits traits associated with tragic heroines, the lack of a profound tragic downfall and the distortion caused by her self-romanticization set her apart. The exploration of her manipulative behaviors with Woodville adds a layer of complexity, showcasing the consequences of her tendencies. Mathilda's character serves as a rich subject for examination, offering insights into the intricacies of human psychology, moral ambiguity, and the impact of grief of losing loved ones on someone.

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