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**The Psychology of the Tragic Fall: Towards a  
Typology of the Tragedy**

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## ABSTRACT

The present research paper makes a contribution to the field of narratology by enhancing discrimination in the analysis of tragic characters. In order to do that, forty English-language tragic films produced, mostly, in the United States in the periods of 1939-2021 have been studied. Tragic characters in those movies have been considered under the light of Baumeister and Scher's model of Common Self-Destructive Tendencies (CSDT) (1988). From this analysis, an original classification of tragedy is presented consisting of three types taking the fall of the character as its central element: Masochistic Tragedy, Self-Immolation Tragedy and Clumsy and Self-Deceit Tragedy. The study eventually concludes that the CSDT Model is a useful tool both for the analysis of tragic characters and their falls as well as for the establishment of a typology of the tragic.

**Keywords:** Tragedy, Self-Destruction, Fall, Masochistic, Self-Immolation, Clumsy

## RESUMEN

El presente Trabajo de Fin de Grado contribuye al campo de la narratología aumentando la discriminación en el análisis de personajes trágicos. Para ello, se han examinado cuarenta películas trágicas en inglés producidas, en su mayoría, en los Estados Unidos entre los años 1939-2021. A continuación, se han examinado los personajes trágicos con el modelo de tendencias autodestructivas comunes de Baumeister y Scher (TADC) (1988). A partir de este análisis, se ofrece una clasificación original de la tragedia consistente en tres tipos tomando la caída del personaje como elemento central: tragedia masoquista, tragedia de autoinmolación y tragedia de torpeza y de autoengaño. El estudio finalmente concluye que el modelo TADC es una herramienta útil tanto para la exploración de personajes trágicos y sus caídas como para el establecimiento de una tipología de lo trágico.

**Palabras clave:** tragedia, autodestrucción, caída, masoquista, autoinmolación, torpeza



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## **1. Introduction**

Several attempts have been made to classify tragedy and offer typologies of it. There is a number of researchers that present contextual tragedies. That is, they classify tragedy according to the context in which they are set. What they take into account is geographical and historical criteria that discriminate between Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Neo-Classical, Bourgeois or Modern tragedies. Others (Sewall et al. 2021; Schultz Gerhard, 1924) classify it in terms of the general literary movements they are ascribed to: Classical, Elizabethan, Neoclassical and Romantic tragedies.

On the other hand, there are inherent typologies. A classification of tragedy is offered taking into account the constitutive elements of the genre. For instance, Tracy (1946) introduces a new typology of tragedy based on the conflict: Tragedy of Irony, Tragedy of Character, Tragedy of Conflicting Convictions and Drama of Situation. Other scholars, such as those mentioned afterwards, use the plot as a classifying criterion. A Revenge Tragedy is therefore identified (Long, 2014; Cressler, 2019). As its name clearly states, it is about characters taking revenge and bearing the consequences of that action. Domestic Tragedy has also been proposed (Benson, 2011) and it speaks of tragic characters experiencing tragic events while belonging to the working-class.

Despite that, all the aforementioned studies provide classifications on the basis of elements that are extraneous to the essence of tragedy. Tracy (1946) mentions conflict as a central element of tragedy. However, conflict is also present in forms of narration like comedy. The same occurs with plots as classificatory criteria. Revenge and Domestic tragedies can be seen in many forms of drama, including comedy. No study, in contrast, has considered suggesting a typology based on the fall of the character as the essential and defining element of tragedy. For this reason, the aim of the present paper is to examine the significance of self-destruction and self-defeating patterns and to provide a new typology of tragedy. Data for this study were collected from 40 films and their protagonists. Special attention has been given to the tragic traits of each character as well as his/her decline. Our analysis has been modeled on “Self-Defeating Behavior Patterns Among Normal Individuals: Review and Analysis of Common Self-Destructive Tendencies” (1988) by Roy Baumeister and Steven Scher from now on referred to as the CSDT (Common Self-Destructive

Tendencies) Model. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the films, other tools from the domain of social psychology have been deployed.

The overall structure of the study takes the form of eight sections, including this introduction. Sections Two and Three lay out the theoretical dimensions of the research in the areas of tragedy and self-destruction. Section Four is concerned with the analytical method used for this study. The three types of tragedies unveiled by our analysis can be found in sections Five, Six and Seven. The remaining section includes a conclusion with a brief summary and critique of the findings.

## **2. Traditional Typologies of the Tragic**

There are two traditional classifications of the tragic: contextual and inherent. Starting with the latter, which classifies tragedy based on the constitutive elements of the genre, H. L. Tracy (1946) reduces the tragic to four types identifying conflict as the central focus of tragedy. Although the types in the article are different, the classification, however, gravitates around an element that is extraneous and non-exclusive to tragedy. That is, when Tracy speaks of the characters for instance fighting against their destiny (tragedy of character) or against their own principles (tragedy of conflicting convictions), he is implying that conflict is a defining element of tragedy. Tolman (1922) also emphasizes conflict and the resolution of it as a defining element of tragedy. He takes the ideas of Gustav Freytag (1896) on how action affects tragedy and presents two types of tragedies: the Macbeth type and the Othello type. Tolman contends that in the Macbeth type there is a point where Macbeth, or another protagonist, makes an erroneous judgement, which, in turn, makes the audience entertain predictions as to what is going to happen next and, therefore, lose interest. Whereas in the Othello type there is a continuous tension created and added by Iago, or the antagonist, which keeps the audience in a constant state of alert and open expectation.

Revenge tragedies (Long, 2014; Cressler, 2019) and Domestic tragedies (Benson, 2011) are part of inherent tragedies as well, but choose the plot as the defining element. While the former depicts characters who take revenge, the latter's central focus is the battle of characters who belong to the working-class.

Allen (1971) combines both features, conflict and plot, and provides a reduction of the tragic to two main types: melodramatic tragedy and moralistic tragedy. He first focuses

on conflict and he explains how in melodramatic tragedy the hero fights against “forces outside of his control” (399) whereas in moral tragedy, the hero is responsible for his/her actions. After probing both tragedies, Allen takes the plot as a central element of tragedy, more specifically the heroic action as “the inevitable reaction of the tragic hero and the most identifying feature of tragedy” (408). The author correlates melodramatic tragedy with rejective tragedy in the sense that when the hero realizes he has to fight, he may reject the individuals or the forces that are against him. Moreover, he also puts moralistic tragedy at the same level with reconciling tragedy. In this case, the hero realizes the responsibility of his actions but because of being constantly limited, he decides to reject or doubt himself and reconcile with the individuals that were guilty.

By contrast, all the previously mentioned elements are by no means exclusive of the tragic but can be found in many other forms of narration. Conflicts such as the ones described by Tracy (1946), Tolman (1922) or Allen (1971) can also be present in comedies for instance. A comedy can have a conflict with a satirizing tone when a relationship of two characters is challenged by opposed values or when characters need to face their own desires and emotions. Revenge, and working-class characters can be depicted in other genres as well such as in Romance.

For contextual typologies, there are many authors that classify tragedy according to geographical and historical data or general literary movements. For instance, Allen (1942) identifies Shakespearean Tragedy, in which the character is a good person but fails to make a good judgement and that brings him to disaster, and Greek Tragedy, in which an external force brings the character to disaster. Nevertheless, these features are not unique of a tragedy, but can be extrapolated to other genres.

All in all, the typologies that have been offered are based on non-essential and non-exclusive elements of tragedy. In this dissertation, it is the fall of the tragic character that provides the main classificatory criterion of tragedy. Therefore, what needs to be taken into account is the internal motivation of each character. There needs to be an unhappy outcome that involves the death and/or the suffering of one of the main characters. More specifically, what triggers that fall needs to be the action or actions of the character who experiences the fall. Does the character commit errors in judgments, which eventually lead him to his

downfall? Does the character refuse to learn from previous traumatic experiences? Does the character have excessive pride? These are few of the features that characterize and qualify the tragic fall of a tragic hero, which contribute ultimately to the objective of this work.

### **3. Psychological Approach to the Fall**

The fall of the tragic hero corresponds, in this project, to his self-destructive behavior. Self-destructive or self-defeating behavior, used interchangeably in this dissertation, is usually associated with suicide. Many specialists, however, reject that correlation. The notion of a self-defeating form of behavior was already present in 1895 when Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer suggested that patients suffer because they remember painful memories, in a condition now referred to as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This means that self-destruction has shifted meanings from suicide to disorder. That is to say, PTSD can have a connection with self-destruction and without necessarily leading to suicide. For instance, the act of recalling traumatic events typically involves self-destructive behavior since subjects cannot reach a successful outcome due to intrusive episodes. As a result, subjects may be prone to protect, or isolate, themselves from what they consider danger, another sign of PTSD and self-defeating behavior.

Psychoanalysts developed different approaches for the comprehension of self-defeating behaviors. Sigmund Freud (1920), for example, presented a theory about two types of drives that can be found in human beings, the life drive and the death drive. The former, also known as “Eros”, relates to the instincts like human survival, sexual drives and pleasure, and it is opposed to the latter, also known as “Thanatos”, which contributes to self-destruction both outward, towards others, by means of aggression and inward, towards oneself, by means of revisiting traumatic experiences. “Thanatos” has a close connection with the theory of the unconscious, the storing of painful experiences, including guilty desires and unresolved conflicts. According to Freud, these conflicts and problems are what constitute the human being and what complicate his survival to the point of seeking self-destruction as a form of escape. That is, if a subject reminisces about distressing events, although the life drive is what helps him to survive, it is likely that he is inclined “to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it

as something belonging to the past” (Freud, 1920, p. 18-19) and, therefore, channel the death drive.

Wilfred Bion’s conception of self-destruction seem to follow in the lineage of Freud’s ideas. Bion explains that if one’s mind is focused on attacking reality, the chances of adapting to that reality decrease. If a person has internal unresolved conflicts and is still “resisting” to process and address those conflicts, which are located in the unconscious, the chances of destroying the self increase and the capacity to socialize is at stake. Therefore, what we observe is a conflict between the inner world and outer world. The subject cannot proceed to develop and adequately relate to society (outer world) if there is a denial of the internal conflicts (inner world). Such is the destruction of the self that Bion graphically describes it as “the physiological state of starvation, and an augmentation of fears of imminent annihilation” (164).

Glenn Walters (1999) has argued that “self-destructive behavior is a function of how the individual psychologically construes survival and copes with perceptions of isolation and separation from the environment.” (57). In other words, although the human being strives for survival and self-preservation, there are many occasions when he has existential fears and is incapable of adapting to the environment, which destroys his well-being. To put this into perspective, Walters managed to isolate the pattern that self-destructive people such as ‘suicidal’ or ‘drug-abusing clients’ follow when managing existential fears. What they do is to assess the consequences of their actions based on learned experiences, which is what the author called “outcome expectancies”, and then select a set of conditions that can reinforce self-destruction if the fears that drives them into self-defeating behavior are not evaluated adequately. The outcomes of this behavior can be dangerous such as changing the environment, constantly making a good impression on others, having the urge to control, etc.

Israel Orbach (2007) proposes different types of self-destruction paying close attention to suicidal individuals. He explains that self-defeating behavior arises because of a wish or need to self-destruct, a need to escape an extreme state of stress, an incorrect response of the individual to a certain interpretation of events, or a dominant self-destructive personality feature such as perfectionism or impulsivity (266-271). The author moreover suggests that two or more types of self-defeating behavior can coexist and they are what

make the individual want to escape from the self or from the pain causing, in many occasions, suicide.

Patricia Kerig (2017) reviews clinical data to discuss what the effects are of psychological trauma in adolescents involved in judicial processes. She concludes that the exposition to traumatic events make the justice-involved youth self-destruct in three forms: suicidal behavior, non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) and reckless behavior. Suicidal behavior comes in the form of suicidal thoughts and attempting to commit. NSSI refers to the actions that the youth take to harm themselves without committing suicide such as cutting or head banging. Reckless behavior, finally, involves behaving in such a self-destructive way that are not seen as self-destructive by the justice-involved youth. Behavioral patterns of this type can be dangerous driving or substance abuse.

Additionally, since this dissertation offers a new typology of tragedy based on the fall of the tragic hero as its defining element, self-destruction has played a major role in the analysis of each character and it captures the particularities of their fall. In other words, this work emerges from a humanizing conception of the character. As a result, the tragic hero has been approached as if it was a human being with all its emotions, desires, mistakes, or, in short, with all its self-destructive tendencies. To do this, some tools that contemplate self-destruction have been reviewed. Multiple personality questionnaires can facilitate the understanding of self-defeating behaviors such as the big five model, which is considered to be one of the best for literary research according to McCrae, Gaines and Wellington (2012). Cámara-Arenas proposes the use of the Big Five personality inventory. But, he also explores the potential usefulness of the Transactional Theory and Causal Attribution (2011) for a better perspective of characters, specifically villains. There is also the Risky, Impulsive, and Self-Destructive Behavior Questionnaire (RISQ), which assesses “the severity, chronicity, and triggers for a range of harmful behaviors” (Sadeh & Baskin-Sommers, 2017). RISQ is a tool that addresses what triggers individuals to engage in self-defeating behaviors and which are the most common self-destructive patterns. The authors found out that exposure to some types of behavior does not necessarily imply that the individual will engage in the behavior. That is, if an individual is exposed to violence, he or she may not always engage in violent

behavior. The authors conclude that RISQ is a reliable tool not only to measure one's risky and self-destructive tendencies but also for researchers to study others' behavior.

Notwithstanding, just as the aforementioned authors have provided tools to examine literary and filmic features, this project uses Baumeister and Scher's CSDT Model (1988) to study tragedy and the fall of a tragic character. Baumeister & Scher define self-destruction as any behavior that has negative effects on oneself. The objective of their work is to review literature on self-destructive tendencies and determine if normal, non-clinical, individuals are prone to destroy themselves. They propose three conceptual models of self-destructive behavior and twelve categories of self-defeating patterns. The model of self-destructive behavior changes depending on intentionality.

In 'Primary self-destruction', the subject both desires and foresees self-destruction. There is a deliberate intention to harm oneself and, thus, endure the pain that involves that self-defeating action. Examples of this behavior can be low self-esteem, social anxiety or wanting to fail because of past failures, which is labeled as "trying to fail", and having a masochistic desire to endure pain, which is called "choosing to suffer".

In 'Tradeoffs', the person knows about the consequences or costs of an action, but they are assumed for the sake of a desirable outcome (benefits). For instance, a person wants immediate pleasure despite future harm or risk. One foresees and accepts self-harm although one does not desire it. There are five different patterns in this model: self-handicapping, which involves putting excuses or obstacles to avoid success; substance abuse; health care negligence; face-work, which is characterized by the perceived need to maintain a good public image at all costs; and shyness, which people use it to avoid bad situations.

'Counterproductive strategies' involve making wrong judgments and, consequently, meeting failure and destruction. Self-destruction in this type of behavior is not foreseen and neither desired. Most of the times, people do not achieve a desirable outcome because of an erroneous judgement (counterproductive bargaining strategies) while it is true that there are other forms of counterproductive strategies such as perseveration, choking under pressure, learned helplessness, and looking for the approval of others by doing favors, also known as ineffective ingratiation strategies.

Finally, self-destruction is considered in this project as any behavior that harms the self, which may not always imply death, and as a tool to provide a typology of tragedy according to the fall of the tragic hero. Characters that have self-destructive tendencies are of particular relevance to provide a typology, specifically characters that deliberately strive for their fall, based on ‘Primary Self-Destruction’, characters that assume their fall as necessary for a benefit, based on ‘Tradeoffs’, and characters that suffer from their fall because of incorrect judgements, based on ‘Counterproductive Strategies’. With each type of self-defeating behavior, a type of tragedy will take place. In the case of ‘Primary Self-Destruction’, there is Masochistic Tragedy, ‘Tradeoffs’ correspond to Self-Immolation Tragedy and ‘Counterproductive Strategies’ relate to Clumsy Tragedy, all of which are discussed in the following sections.

#### **4. Method**

For this study, data collection was performed by means of the analysis of forty films. All of them are English-language movies produced in the United States and United Kingdom, among others, in the periods of 1939-2021. This data as well as remaining information can be found in Table 1 in the Appendix section. The most important part of this selection is the category in which the movies are included, i.e. tragedies. This is where the first, or general, stage of the investigation takes place. As explained in Section 2, this study considers a movie tragic when characters experience a certain type of fall caused by the character’s actions. Therefore, in order to select suitable films, a concise initial analysis was carried out. An interpretative process was performed by means of identifying each character and their corresponding falls.

Once the movies were collected making sure they include the elements aforementioned and can be labelled as tragic, the follow-up stage, more specific, unfolds. In this phase, a more detailed comprehension of each type of fall is needed. This calls for an extensive investigation into the level of involvement of the tragic character in his fall. The aim is to check to what extent the fall corresponds to which of the three types of tragedy explained below. To achieve this, utterances and actions were analyzed as a way of determining the motivations of each character. In other words, this work is performed on the basis of a humanizing conception of the characters, where they are all evaluated as if they



were real human beings. The fictional character is obviously not a human being, but it is a filmic device that invites the dynamic construal by the audience. Such is our starting premise of a coherent and consistent representation of a human being. The result is an outline of each character's rationale: what he wants or needs, what he expects or not to happen, what he believes, what he does or plans to do, what he feels, etc. This representation is created out of a theory-guided interpretation of available data. On the one hand, the internal motivation is considered to determine which type of fall the character has. On the other hand, four units of analysis are taken into account to assess that fall. Action, which can be a one-time action or a repetitive/habitual action, tends to reveal the character's behavior. Speech can be indicative of the protagonists' traits through both content, what characters say about themselves and others, and form, the language and style with which they communicate. External appearance and environment rely on a relation of spatial contiguity. The surrounding of a character as well as the presentation of himself reflects the mental state of that character and, consequently, we can learn how he or she is.

Each tragedy corresponds to a certain internal motivation; to self-destruct as a deliberate intention, to self-destruct as a way of obtaining a benefit that has a foreseeable cost, to self-destruct as a way of obtaining a benefit that has not a foreseeable cost. Hence, three types of tragedies can be constructed. In Masochistic Tragedy, the character deliberately strives to harm and destruct the self. In Self-Immolation Tragedy, characters fall because they want a benefit in spite of the foreseeable costs. In Clumsy Tragedy characters suffer because of their flawed evaluation of the surrounding world and, hence, deceive themselves.

### ***5. Leaving Las Vegas: Masochistic Tragedy***

In the present model, we consider Masochistic Tragedy one which includes Primary Self-Destruction, or the desire to destroy oneself partially or completely. The fall that corresponds to this type of tragedy is, therefore, expected, specifically an end in itself. Unlike other type of tragedies in which the fall is the means to an end, in Masochistic Tragedy, the character desires and expects self-destruction, his fall, which is the end in itself. There is one straightforward instance of this tragedy and it is the one being offered in *Leaving Las Vegas*.

Ben, one of the main characters in the movie, represents the willingness to destroy the self. Ben's codes, both verbal and non-verbal, confirm Masochistic Tragedy. Instances of this can be "Maybe I shouldn't breath so much" (08:50) or "I came here to drink myself to death" (32:57). Pure Masochistic Tragedy is the one in which the character desires to harm himself just because of the pleasure of harming, destroying or killing himself. This is somehow irrational because of the paradox of experiencing pleasure with pain. Even if pleasure is experienced, there could be tradeoff patterns. In the case of Ben, he is an ambiguous character that escapes classification, he does not allow himself to be built. That is, viewers cannot clearly grasp if his fall is because of a primary self-destruction (Masochistic Tragedy) or a tradeoff self-defeating behavior (Self-Immolation Tragedy).

There is an instance when Sera, his girlfriend, asks him why is he trying to kill himself to which he responds with "I don't remember, I just know that I want to" (48:05-48:11). This is interesting because, again, viewers encounter ambiguity. He acknowledges his desire to die and that this desire has an origin, a motive or a reason behind it, even though he does not remember it. We are presented with the fact that he has been brought to the self-destructive state he is in by something of his past, a past perhaps so distant that he does not remember. Otherwise, the utterance also allows us to interpret that the time he has been wishing and waiting to die is so long that he does no longer remember when he started to long for self-destruction.

The title of the movie reveals more information about Sanderson as well. *Leaving Las Vegas* can be interpreted in two different ways; either Ben leaves Las Vegas because he is dead or he leaves Las Vegas because he is free. If it is the second case, we have a clear sign that Sanderson has gone through a long period of tradeoff pattern before deciding to move to a primary pattern. It is true that he abuses alcohol, he does not go to work and his boss ends up firing him, he causes trouble everywhere he goes as he cannot contain his impulse of drinking and this behavior is what destroys him. However, his fall is not determined by that. Rather, it is the laziness, the carelessness and the unwillingness which drive him to fall, to self-destruct.

Overall, Masochistic Tragedy is quite rare to find. From the analysis of all the forty movies, only the aforementioned fits in the category of Masochistic Tragedy. This type is the

most incomprehensible form of self-defeating behavior. It seems unreasonable that a character pursues a methodical way of defeating the self. There is no way of understanding the deliberate intention of self-destruction. It is obscure and it goes beyond human reason and thinking. In fact, there is not so much, not to say any, evidence that normal people engage in desired self-destruction. These phenomena seem to transcend what is known as reasonable or human, which gives the character a supernatural quality. In *Leaving Las Vegas*, Ben destroys himself not because of a misjudgment (Self-Deceit Tragedy-Counterproductive Self-Destruction), not because he wants to escape from a distressing state of mind (Self-Immolation Tragedy-Tradeoff Self-Destruction), but he harms himself just because he wants to (Masochistic Tragedy-Primary Self-Destruction), which violates realistic values for it is illogical and irrational.

## **6. Self-Immolation Tragedy**

Self-Immolation Tragedies are tragic since the protagonist falls because of his own actions and decisions. Characters in this type of tragedies have tradeoff self-destructive patterns meaning that they agree on assuming the consequences and facing the risks involved in making a certain decision for the sake of obtaining a benefit. This type of tragedy, moreover, can be classified in two subtypes according to the motivation of the character.

### **6.1. Noble Pursuit**

Characters in Self-Immolation Tragedy that have a noble pursuit fall because they want a benefit from it, which they consider a good cause, hence the name of this subtype of tragedy. In addition, there can be found two more tragedies depending on the type of noble pursuit the characters follow.

#### **6.1.1. Heroic Tragedy**

If the protagonist has a noble pursuit and his self-destruction takes place when he or she sacrifices himself or herself just for the sake of obtaining a benefit, which for them is saving others, we are encountered with Heroic or Sacrificial Tragedy.

This happens in movies such as *Prisoners* or *Law Abiding Citizen*. The father of the family takes the matter with his own hand after his daughter has been kidnapped, in the case of the latter movie killed. What he does is to kidnap the perpetrator and make him suffer like he did to his daughter, in the case of *Law Abiding Citizen*, he kills him. In spite of knowing

that he could be sued and even face a life sentence, he harms, sacrifices, himself and builds his fall just so his daughter remains safe. In this case, we can also find a hint of revenge on the protagonist's motivation in the sense that he may want to get revenge on the other character, he will not stop until the other understands what was like to undergo a suffering experience while his daughter was gone. In short, we can observe a point of contact between Self-Immolation and Revenge Tragedy.

The same pattern can be seen in *Schindler's List*. Oscar Schindler, a German member of the Nazi party from Czechoslovakia, saves a thousand Polish-Jewish refugees from the Holocaust by creating factories where they can work. The protagonist assumes what it takes to save Jewish people when being a member of the Nazi party, but for the sake of saving them, he even risks his own life.

A similar behavior is also represented in *Gran Torino*. Walt Kowalski, a Korean War veteran who has conservative views feels alienated with the world and does not like foreign people. However, when his neighbor's sister is kidnapped, he does not hesitate to help them even though they are Hmong people. Now, this can coincide with two types of tragedies. Evasive Tragedy, on the one hand, can correspond with his fall since he does not want to hold onto his dysfunctional life anymore, as he finds out that his health is at stake and, more than that, he feels isolated. Heroic Tragedy, on the other hand, can also match his behavior and, consequently, his fall since his way of saving the girl is by sacrificing himself, he lets the perpetrator shoot him instead of harming his neighbors.

### **6.1.2. Evasive Tragedy**

Evasive Tragedy can be found when characters who hold onto a dysfunctional lifestyle reach to extreme points of mental distress consider risky activities and even death as appealing or as the only solution.

In the case of *Dead Poets Society*, Neil, the protagonist, is a young boy who wants to follow his dreams of becoming an actor, but his father has already decided to enroll him in Military School. There is an evasive tradeoff self-defeating pattern. This does not mean that Neil wants death as such, but he prefers death to enrolling to Military School and the life his father has prepared for him. He prefers escaping from a reality, from a distressing state he cannot bear, than to go against his principles and satisfy the ones of his father.

The character of Christopher McCandless in *Into the Wild* experiences Self-Immolation Tragedy in an evasive form as well. He is a young man who sets out to start a new life in the wild. Despite knowing the consequences of living surrounded by the dangers of nature, he is decisive of his actions. He has been subjected to some limitations because of his conservatory family and for the sake of obtaining a benefit, which for him is the awakening of his soul, he evades by going “into the wild”.

## **6.2. Non-Noble Pursuit**

Characters in Self-Immolation tragedies can also fall because of their non-noble pursuit. What this means is that they are ready to take any risk for the sake of obtaining a benefit, but the difference with noble pursuit self-immolation tragedies is that, in this case, characters’ internal motivation and goals are egotistic and anti-social. To put this into perspective, we can look at the following examples.

### **6.2.1. Revenge Tragedy or Tragedy of Stubbornness**

An instance of a non-noble pursuit is to be found in movies where Revenge Tragedy or Tragedy of Stubbornness takes place. The internal motivation of the characters and what triggers their fall is the action of taking revenge or the stubborn behavior.

With the adaptation of his well-known tragedy, Shakespeare’s *Othello* is an excellent case of a Revenge Tragedy. Iago manipulates Othello into thinking that Desdemona was not loyal to him. He does this because he thinks Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia. Therefore, it is Iago’s determination and stubbornness to convince and manipulate Othello, or in this case take revenge, what triggers his fall.

Revenge Tragedy also takes other forms such as in *Ginger Snaps* and *Carrie*. The protagonist in both movies is a young girl who is experiencing the coming of age and finds out that she is not enough according to social standards. For this reason, she starts having a self-destructive behavior that pushes her to meet those social constructions. However, after some time, she takes revenge on all the people surrounding her by killing them after realizing that she is not obliged to meet people’s expectations of her.

### **6.2.2. Evasive Tragedy**

Evasive tragedy was also mentioned before in a noble pursuit Self-Immolation tragedy. However, it can also be found in characters who have a non-noble pursuit. That is, for the sake of obtaining a benefit, which in this case is a wrong goal and a wrong decision, they sacrifice what they have.

*Requiem for a Dream* presents a group of drug-addicted characters who experience a life full of problems from their dysfunctional living. In an attempt to escape from their problems, they make wrong decisions that lead to their tragic fall. These wrong decisions are consequences of their drug addiction. All of them are risking their health to obtain a benefit, which for ones is to earn money and for others is to have a desirable appearance. This type of tradeoff self-destructive pattern constitutes human weaknesses and wounds. Because they have lack of will, of decision and of character, we call this tragedy Evasive tragedy with a non-noble pursuit.

## **7. Clumsy and Self-Deceit Tragedy**

This project considers Clumsy Tragedy and Self-Deceit Tragedy that in which characters fall because they make decisions based on erroneous judgments. According to the CSDT Model, this behavior corresponds to counterproductive self-destructive pattern. They deceive themselves in order to obtain a satisfactory outcome, but their self-destructive tendencies such as overconfidence or determination, or unsolved internal contradictions when recalling traumatic events interfere in the process. This type of tragedy is the most common and classic of all and it has been seen in all of the movies mentioned afterwards.

### **7.1. Clumsy Tragedy**

Clumsy Tragedy is seen when characters take action without thinking twice, hence the name of the tragedy. To comprehend it better, the following movies classified according to the type of pursuit of the character, noble or non-noble, are explained.

#### **7.1.1. Noble Pursuit**

A noble pursuit in Clumsy Tragedy is considered noble since characters fall because their realization comes late as they were not careful enough when assessing their goals, but their intentions remain as good.

*Joker* also represents the concept of Clumsy Tragedy, but requires a careful consideration. Joker, or Arthur Fleck, is a complex character due to his psychological conditions, which do not allow him to perform well. On the one hand, his fall can relate to Self-Immolation Tragedy. “What do you get when you cross a mentally ill-loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash [...] I’ll tell you what you get” (1:43:50) says Joker right before shooting Murray. This is a clear verbal indication of his mental state. Taking into account that he has been repeatedly traumatized and not received any expression of support and affection, he does everything that he can to gain attention even though the risks are dangerous. There are suicidal signs in his behavior and in his actions as well. When he finds out his mother committed to Arkham State Hospital because of a long history of trauma, he attempts to freeze himself in his fridge as he cannot bear the feeling of that realization. It shares similarities with Neil on *Dead Poets Society* in the sense that they evade reality, they do not want to hold on to it. On the other hand, he considers those risks as right. In his mind, shooting two men in the subway or shooting Murray and having suicidal behavior are his tools to draw attention to him. But, because of the influence his neurological conditions have on him, he fails to assess his goals correctly and lets his clumsiness trigger his fall, Clumsy Tragedy.

Christopher McCandless in *Into the Wild*, was aforementioned in Self-Immolation Tragedy. Notwithstanding, he did not judge what would happen if he reached a certain state of health. That is, at the very end of the movie, we can see he is clearly not right, his health is at stake because he has had no access to food for a long time. As he is desperate to survive, he confuses a plant with a poisonous one and he slowly dies, which is what triggers his fall.

### **7.1.2. Non-Noble Pursuit**

Clumsy Tragedy with a non-noble pursuit is distinguished by characters whose fall is their faulty internal motivations. They fall not only because they did not assess the outcomes correctly, but their judgements were made based on their own good, non-noble indeed.

One of the most striking result to emerge from the data is that there is a repetitive pattern among some characters. This is that of protagonists, in this case all women, who decide to tolerate the behavior of their partners in exchange of a benefit. Now, this is properly a tradeoff self-destructive behavior, present in Self-Immolation Tragedy. However, as time

goes by, they realize very late that their partners' behavior is self-destructive, which makes them fall and, in some cases, die. We consider this as Clumsy Tragedy; the female character self-sabotages that the company of her partner such as in *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Sophie's Choice* or the material benefits, money, of her partner such as in *Casino* will bring her a satisfactory settlement. Their realization comes when they discover the obscure and toxic side of their relatives and, since they have convinced, deceived, themselves that the outcome will be acceptable, they fall.

## **7.2. Self-Deceit Tragedy**

In Self-Deceit Tragedy, the protagonists are harming themselves, or falling, because they have been sabotaging themselves, self-deceiving, to reach a certain goal. We can find two types of Self-Deceit Tragedy depending on the pursuit of the character.

### **7.2.1. Noble Pursuit**

The character does not realize he or she is undergoing a self-destructive behavior, but to reach a certain outcome, which they consider noble and not evil, they convince themselves to get what they want.

In *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, Jay Gatsby behaves with tradeoff self-destructive patterns, specifically two. On the one hand, there is an evasive fall since Gatsby is so dissatisfied with his life that he wants to escape from it. This dissatisfaction comes from the lack of company of his ex-girlfriend. Therefore, he escapes by creating a façade of himself, acquiring luxurious properties, so that others think he is enjoying life. On the other hand, there is a heroic fall. Gatsby is in love with Daisy and he does anything in his power to be with her. At the end of the movie, he saves her from getting her image tarnished because she run someone over with a car. He could've spoken his truth and tell everyone it was Daisy who did it, but he protected her saying it was him who was behind that incident sacrificing, thus, himself for the sake of saving Daisy (Self-Immolation Tragedy). By contrast, there is also Self-Deceit Tragedy in the sense that Gatsby convinces himself on how Daisy still loves him, but in reality, he is in love with an idea or construction of her. He falls, afterwards, when he realizes that it is not what he had expected or had in mind.

*Romeo + Juliet* is another of Shakespeare's tragedies and shares communalities with *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Romeo cannot marry with Juliet since their families are not only



opposed in values, but against this proposition. For this reason, they do everything they can to see each other such as having secret meetings. This is clearly a tradeoff self-destructive pattern, Self-Immolation Tragedy, since they are willing to risk anything for the sake of meeting together. However, they fall because their plan fails to reach a successful outcome, which for them was to get married. They were aiming too high but they were confident of their goals and end up dying, Self-Deceit Tragedy.

### **7.2.2. Non-Noble Pursuit**

Self-Deceit Tragedy with a non-noble pursuit involves characters who convince themselves that their actions, not good, non-noble, are necessary to reach their objective.

Carlito in *Carlito's Way* was released from prison after being thirty years incarcerated and promises himself not to engage in unlawful activities. However, as soon as he is out, he is already involved in drug deals. He knows that what he is doing is illegal, but he self-deceits because “it comes to me [...] there's gotta be somewhere to hide”. He convinces himself that he needs to do everything he is doing and because of it, he falls and dies.

Macbeth kills King Duncan and his two guards so as to win over the throne in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. This is a tradeoff self-destructive behavior and, consequently, shares characteristics with Self-Immolation Tragedy, specifically Revenge Tragedy. His ambition and overconfidence, counterproductive behavior present in Self-Deceit Tragedy, by contrast, are what determine his fall. He dies because he is acting for his own good and is being highly secure of his actions, which are completely immoral and drive him to disaster.

## **8. Conclusion**

The main goal of the current study was to contribute to the field of narratology by means of offering a new typology of tragedy based on the fall of the tragic character. The most significant finding to emerge from this paper is that the fall of the character is closely linked with his or her self-destructive behavior. Taken together, the evidence from this study suggests that the connection between psychology and narrative not only reveals an in-depth examination of characters, but also contributes to opening new ways of understanding narrative such as providing a new typology of tragedy.

On this basis, we conclude that our typology based on the CSDT Model provided by Baumeister & Scher (1988) has proved applicable to the classification of tragic films. This model points to the existence of one type of tragedy, Masochistic Tragedy, for which we have hardly found a single case. The other two forms of tragedy, that of Self-Immolation and Clumsy, are more frequent. However, we have not found any tragic film whose fall could be clearly ascribed, without ambiguity of any kind, to one of the proposed types and subtypes. Rather, these three elemental tragedies seem to have intersection areas where they coalesce. Since characters are complex and their self-destructive tendencies change, the psychological aspects of their fall changes as well. That is the reason why one can find a movie in which, for instance, there is both Self-Immolation and Clumsy Tragedy as seen before.

Moreover, we also come to the conclusion that while the CSDT Model does allow for an operational classification of tragedy, this can only be achieved through subjective components provided ultimately by the reader or researcher. For this, different readers might employ the same model, that is, the same analytical tools, to defend different perceptions of the object to be analyzed. In such a case, our typology offers a unique language to facilitate constructive conclusions in case of discrepancies.

As for future lines of research, it would be advisable to carry out in-depth studies of each of the types of tragedies found in this dissertation. It would be useful to complete this deductive work with others of a qualitative nature by means of questionnaires, interviews, case studies, etc., to verify to what extent our proposal is compatible with the reader's judgments.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Information about the analyzed movies

Title	Language	Year	Country	Based on	Director	Character(s)
<b>Frankenstein</b>	English	1931	United States	<i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Shelley	James Whale	Henry Frankenstein, Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor Moritz, the Monster
<b>Wild River</b>	English	1960	United States	<i>Dunbar's Cove</i> by Borden Deal & <i>Mud on the Stars</i> by William Bradford	Elia Kazan	Chuck Glover, Carol Garth Baldwin, Ella Garth, Walter Clark, Sam Johnson
<b>Bonnie and Clyde</b>	English	1967	United States	True events	Warren Beatty	Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker
<b>Chinatown</b>	English	1974	United States	-	Roman Polanski	Jake Gittes, Evelyn Cross Mulwray, Noah Cross
<b>Sophie's Choice</b>	English, Polish, German	1982	United States	<i>Sophie's Choice</i> by William Styron	Alan J. Pakula	Sophie Zawistowski, Natahan Landau, Stingo
<b>Death of a Salesman</b>	English	1985	United States	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> by Arthur Miller	Volker Schlöndorff	Loman family
<b>Dead Poets Society</b>	English	1989	United States	-	Peter Weir	Neil Perry, Todd Anderson, John Keating
<b>The Handmaid's Tale</b>	English	1990	United States, West Germany	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood	Volker Schlöndorff	Kate/Offred, the Commander, Serena Joy, Moira, Ofglen, Janine
<b>Carlito's Way</b>	English	1993	United States	<i>Carlito's Way</i> by Brian de Palma & <i>After Hours</i> by Judge Edwin Torres	Brian de Palma	Carlito Brigante, David Kleinfeld, Gail, Benny Blanco, Pachanga



<b>Schindler's List</b>	English	1993	United States	<i>Schindler's Ark</i> by Thomas Keneally	Steven Spielberg	Oskar Schindler, Itzhak Stern, Amon Göth, Emilie Schindler, Helen Hirsch
<b>Seven</b>	English	1995	United States	-	David Fincher	Detective David Mills, Detective Lieutenant William Somerset, John Doe
<b>Leaving Las Vegas</b>	English	1995	United States	<i>Leaving Las Vegas</i> by John O'Brien	Mike Figgis	Ben Sanderson and Sera
<b>Casino</b>	English	1995	United States	<i>Casino: Love and Honor in Las Vegas</i> by Nicholas Pileggi	Martin Scorsese	Sam "Ace" Rothstein, Nicky Santoro and Ginger McKenna
<b>Othello</b>	English	1995	United States, United Kingdom	<i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare	Oliver Parker	Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Cassio, Roderigo
<b>Romeo + Juliet</b>	English	1996	United States, Australia, Canada	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare	Baz Luhrmann	The House of Montague, the house of Capulet
<b>The English Patient</b>	English, German, Italian, Arabic	1996	United States, United Kingdom	<i>The English Patient</i> by Michael Ondaatje	Anthony Minghella	Almásy, Hana, Caravaggio, Katharine Clifton, Kip
<b>Titanic</b>	English	1997	United States	True events	James Cameron	Jack Dawson, Rose DeWitt Bukater
<b>American History X</b>	English	1998	United States	-	Tony Kaye	Danny and Derek Vinyard
<b>American Beauty</b>	English	1999	United States	-	Sam Mendes	Burnham family, Fitts family, Angela Hayes
<b>The Green Mile</b>	English	1999	United States	<i>The Green Mile</i> by Stephen King	Frank Darabont	Paul Edgecomb, John Coffey, Eduard "Del" Delacroix, William "Wild Bill" Wharton

<b>Requiem for a Dream</b>	English	2000	United States	<i>Requiem for a Dream</i> by Hubert Shelby Jr.	Darren Aronofsky	Sara and Harry Goldfarb, Marion Silver, Tyrone C. Love
<b>Ginger Snaps</b>	English	2000	Canada	-	John Fawcett	Brigitte and Ginger Fitzgerald
<b>A Walk to Remember</b>	English	2002	United States	<i>A Walk to Remember</i> by Nicholas Sparks	Adam Shankman	Landon Carter, Jamie Sullivan
<b>Million Dollar Baby</b>	English	2004	United States	<i>Rope Burns: Stories from the Corner</i> by F.X. Toole	Clint Eastwood	Maggie Fitzgerald, Frankie Dunn and Eddie Dupris
<b>Brokeback Mountain</b>	English	2005	United States	“Brokeback Mountain” by Annie Proulx	Ang Lee	Ennis del Mar, Jack Twist
<b>Into the Wild</b>	English	2007	United States	<i>Into the Wild</i> by Jon Krakauer	Sean Penn	Christopher McCandless
<b>The Wrestler</b>	English	2008	United States	-	Darren Aronofsky	Randy “The Ram” Robinson, Pam/Cassidy and Stephanie
<b>Gran Torino</b>	English	2008	United States	-	Clint Eastwood	Walt Kowalski, Thao Vang Lor, Sue Lor
<b>Law Abiding Citizen</b>	English	2009	United States	-	F. Gary Gray	Nicholas “Nick” Rice, Clyde Alexander Shelton
<b>The Great Gatsby</b>	English	2013	United States, Australia	<i>The Great Gatsby</i> by F. Scott Fitzgerald	Baz Luhrmann	Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway, Daisy and Tom Buchanan
<b>Prisoners</b>	English	2013	United States	-	Denis Villeneuve	Keller Dover, Detective Loki, Alex Jones
<b>Carrie</b>	English	2013	United States	<i>Carrie</i> by Stephen King	Kimberly Peirce	Carrie and Margaret White
<b>The Imitation Game</b>	English	2014	United States	<i>Alan Turing: The Enigma</i> by Andrew Hodges	Morten Tyldum	Alan Turing, Joan Clarke, Hugh Alexander, Commander Denniston

<b>Sicario</b>	English	2015	United States	-	Denis Villeneuve	Kate Macer, Matt Grave, Alejandro Gillick, Reggie Wayne
<b>Southpaw</b>	English	2015	United States, China	-	Antoine Fuqua	Billy “The Great” Hope, Maureen and Leila
<b>Manchester by the Sea</b>	English	2016	United States	-	Kenneth Lonergan	Lee, Patrick and Joe Chandler, Randi
<b>Wind River</b>	English	2017	France, United Kingdom, United States	-	Taylor Sheridan	Cory Lambert, Jane Banner, Natalie Hanson
<b>Joker</b>	English	2019	United States	DC Comics characters	Todd Phillips	Arthur Fleck / Joker, Penny Fleck, Sophie Dumond
<b>Mass</b>	English	2021	United States	-	Fran Kranz	Richard, Linda, Jay and Gail Perry
<b>The Tragedy of Macbeth</b>	English	2021	United States	<i>Macbeth</i> by William Shakespeare	Joel Coen	Lord and Lady Macbeth

*Note.* “Based on” refers to movies adapted from literary productions or movies based on true events, “Character(s)” only includes the protagonist(s) since they are the ones analyzed in this project.