

Representing ophelia: women, madness, and the responsibilities of feminist critic...

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Death of female characters is a main theme in all three texts, including *A Doll's House*. In the most famous tragedy *Hamlet*, all the characters die, including the female ones, Gertrude and Ophelia. Ophelia's death can be blamed on her madness. Ophelia's madness drove her to commit suicide, although some may argue that it was in fact an accident, which was brought on by her lack of being able to demonstrate any maturity in trying to cope with her losses, and in return can only inflict her madness on everyone else.

We can say she finally dies rebellious towards when she wasn't given the proper burial because of the fact that suicide is a huge sin, using her death to prove a point that she couldn't being alive when she didn't stick up for her lover Hamlet, she did have courage. Gertrude's death can be seen as her guilty of Hamlet's madness she looks towards blaming herself for her son's suffering, which is noticed whilst she in conversation with Claudius, " I doubt it is not other but the main: his father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

She drinks the poison to save her sons life and when she is nearly stopped by Claudius she replies " I will my lord, I pray you pardon me" which implies she knew what she was doing. In *Wuthering Heights* Catherine's leads her down a road of destruction and eventually death. Her stubborn pride and determination to get her own way pushes her to extreme lengths. Her inability to control her situation any more causes her to declare, " If I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend-if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I'll try to break their hearts by breaking my own. She self-consciously jeopardises her health to gain the attention of Edgar and Heathcliff.

Although both Edgar and Heathcliff do suffer enormously as her health deteriorates and eventually it causes her death. In *A Doll's House*, we can say that Nora also died. The fact that she leaves her husband and starts a new life in her home village portrays the death of her old life and the birth of a new independent. The stage directions at the end project this, "(The sound of a door shutting is heard from below. "

In all three texts, all women died as a result of the men in their life but unlike the rest, Nora 'died' for the better. Ending, we see that the women explored in these texts, especially Hamlet are portrayed much more than 'angels and whores' as Thompson and Taylor analyzed. They are deep and complex characters flawed and suppressed by the men around them and social conformity roles. Each woman in their own way goes against what was expected of them; Gertrude being overtly sexual and standing against her husband in order to save her son.

Ophelia committing the ultimate sin of suicide and, although questioned, maybe even sex before marriage. Catherine's disregard to her husband Edgar by seeing Heathcliff and also the forbidden passion between the two and lastly Nora's scandalous behavior leaving her children and husband behind and starting a new life. All of the women make decisions which make them flawed. Catherine places social status before what she knows is right chooses to marry Edgar Linton over Heathcliff her soul mate.

Nora's sole courage in taking money behind her husband's back to make him better may not seem bad in current society; however, in those days it was

unheard of and shocking, let alone leaving behind your children and husband, making the play very controversial when it was released. Ibsen may have created Nora's role to raise awareness to the audience and show that women should have rights too and society was too strict in the way the treated women. Overall, the women in these texts show complexity and changed the course on how people view women, even today.