

A Psychoanalytical perspective and the corruption of power in the tragic hero.

This essay will be an objective deep dive into the characters of Boromir and Maximas, discussing and analysing key scenes in their character arcs and their links to the corruption of power within them through a psychoanalytical perspective. In this essay there will be a range of credible sources used to back up arguments, key scenes and quotes from each respected movie, books or from the author or director themselves. Through this essay there will also be key images displayed along with highlighted examples to give further context to this essay's structured arguments.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier this essay will be from a [psychoanalytical perspective](#) **(1. Further definition here. Safran and Gardner-Schuster, 2016)** his means that the character's mentioned later on this essay will be purely told and explored from their own mindset and outside forces that influenced their own actions and ways of thinking. As a key component to a well written and deep character exploring how they think and feel within their own mind is an interesting perspective to explore from, it allows the reader or viewer to get a far better understanding and perhaps share some new light on characters they otherwise did not get the full picture of.

The other main subject this essay will be exploring is the tragic hero archetype. This character archetype explores the idea of an individual with one or two fatal flaws to their character who is doomed to fail in their journey regardless of their best efforts and good intentions. **(2. A further description of the [Tragic hero archetype](#). No date provided).**



It's an interesting character archetype to explore from a psychoanalytical perspective due to the usual complexity and deeper understanding required for the character's journey. A lot can twist and change at the drop of a hat with a character like this and there are a multitude of examples and scenarios presented in media than can be explored and delved into, physiologically wise.

(Othello from Othello, 1995)

Another reason as to why such characters are objectively more interesting to look at is their objectively usual subversion of expectations compared to the likes of the more standard and simple Hero's journey. **(4. A further deep dive into the [Hero's journey](#). Sep 3, 2021)** Masterclass explains the hero's journey as a **“Test of character, strength**

and skill. An ultimate battle that tests a hero's resolve with a triumphant return home or victory."

From the explanation alone this sounds just the same as the hero's journey however unfortunately their tale isn't so much a fairytale like the hero's journey but a frightening reality that not everyone gets their happy ending no matter how noble that character is.



The first individual this essay will be exploring is Boromir, a fictional character originally from the popular book (Written by [J.R.R. Tolkien](#)) and then adapted into the film (Directed by [Peter Jackson](#)) franchise Lord of The Rings. A valiant warrior and first son to the steward of Gondor known famously for his skills in combat upon the battlefield, admired by even the people of Gondor. (3. [Information provided by the fandom Wiki on Boromir](#), No date.)

Throughout the film Boromir is presented as Aragon's polar opposite, seemingly always butting heads and sharing different ideals and sides of an argument... this is presented clearly within the film itself. "A king must be willing to first lower himself and live the life of a common man before rising once more to his full stature. Boromir fails this test, according to this article written Robertson. R (5. [Seven Paths of the Hero in the lord of the rings introduction, 2007](#)) He presents this idea further throughout this article that Boromir and Aragon are just simply two sides of the same coin but Boromir just failed to realise what it takes to truly be king and was arrogant in facing the reality before him, he was just simply a steward's son and not a king. Boromir fails this test as stated while Aragon fully passes, this reinforces the comparison and differences between the Heroes' journey and the tale of the tragic hero further. However, unlike some tragic hero cases like Othello or [Ned Stark](#) (Game of Thrones) Boromir is able to redeem himself before his death by fighting off the horde of Orcs to protect the ring and its fellowship.

Moving forward from the character's basic introduction, this essay will now tackle a deep dive objective psychoanalysis of a scene from Lord of The Rings. This essay will explore one of the very first introductions of the character of Boromir and then compare and contrast it to his final scene within the film and explore and dissect how the character evolved and changed.

The clip below will be the first scene this essay will be delving into and then delving into briefly how this moment or his character was tackled in the original source material.

(6. [The Council of Elron Part 1](#))

As the scene begins Frodo places down the ring at the request of Elrond, as everyone witnesses and is in awe of its appearance Boromir is the prime focus with the screen centre focusing directly on his reaction, he is also the first to speak on the ring before anyone else. Boromir is seemingly already entranced by its presence; you can see it in his awe facial expression and the delivery of the actor himself in the way he says **“So it’s true”** as if the ring’s existence was so unbelievable to him that he didn’t even deem it to be real until that very moment. Like something spoken of as mere myth or fairytale amongst the people, something so beyond this world or too good to be true perhaps within Boromir’s mind.



It is imperative to point out the very second reaction we receive within the scene is from Aragorn, Boromir’s counterpart. However, unlike Boromir who is seemingly more allured by the ring from its first appearance, Aragorn is more focused on the reaction of Boromir himself as he looks to his right, seemingly untainted or allured as Boromir by the ring. This already established the two

character’s place within the story and their archetypes and the mentality these two individuals already represent and perhaps their fates within the future of the story itself...

The next major moment of this scene is the ring whispering or tempting itself out to select members of the council, specifically being three of the main races of middle earth. First Legolas the elf, Gimli the dwarf and then finally Boromir a man... the first two are visibly tempted but still resistant however for Boromir he appears to be immediately encapsulated by it just as before... he becomes fixated upon the ring, becoming soft spoken and passionate with his wording as he speaks of a dream to the council. He continues to monologue while being drawn closer and closer to the ring and judging by the reactions of both Elrond and Gandalf you could see their unease and mistrust for the way Boromir was speaking and acting within regards to ring. Then the ring takes its eventual final grasp on Boromir before being abruptly halted by both Elrond and Boromir... seemingly startling Boromir as if he had just been thrown out of a trance.



Even after all of this however, even after being startled and warned of its evil Boromir then says something that throws everyone off balance and really goes to show how he really thought about the ring. ***“It is a gift.”***

(Boromir is almost romanticising the ring) So, what can we draw from this short analysis... the film has already gone on to show at great lengths how easily Boromir was influenced by the ring and showing how easily twisted and manipulated at the prospect of its power, believing it to not even be real at first which demonstrates how much within his own mind he believed such a power could not even exist which then goes on to prove this statement even further when he refers to it as ***“a gift.”*** Something that they could use against their foes. The idea of its power and potential already ridding Boromir of any reasoning or logic becoming far more passionate and outspoken on his thoughts on its use.

He then goes on to parade his father and his kingdom and how they have kept the other council members lands safe he has become far more bitter and antagonistic to the rest of the council suddenly which may very well be the effects of the ring on his mind or how Boromir already felt deep down within himself. He does not see the logic in not using this rings power against Mordor... once again proving that Boromir has become or already was devoid of logic and driven purely by passion and emotion. Which is in huge contrast to Aragon who is visibly exhausted by Boromir’s outspokenness and irrationality, being the very first individual to speak up against Boromir and shut down his argument with a logical and truthful response.

Regardless of how logical and right Aragon was in this matter, Boromir seemingly takes offence to his disagreement, resulting to petty personal jabs and ego driven arrogance. ***“What would a ranger know of this matter?”*** He is speaking down to Aragon as he sees him lesser than him in this matter and this only hurts Boromir’s pride more when Legolas reveals that this man is actually the heir to Gondor... Boromir’s supposed eventual king to which he the son of the steward would eventually serve.

At the news Boromir is visibly in shock and disbelief, his eyebrows ever so slightly twitching at the idea, even speaking the question out loud to himself in arrogant denial. It’s very



obvious to even the common eye that Boromir's ego and foothold of authority within the council is shattered with his consistent irrational behaviour and petty ego driven monologues...

He even outright denies the idea of Gondor having a king, believing fully that he and the steward of Gondor is all that it needed ***"Gondor has no king, Gondor needs no king."***

From the first proper introduction to Boromir's character, we can conclude that he is a highly emotional individual and very easily tempted by the

prospect of the ring's power, it is very evident from the get go that this character would go on to cause conflict or problems within the fellowship. Which in contrast to every other member of the fellowship Boromir feels like the Blacksheep of the group, he stands out in personality and character... compared to the rest of the fellowship who are generally in pursuit to destroy the ring, Boromir would wish to use its power for his own ends against Mordor however it is never clear or stated that is where he would stop the use of such a power.

Before moving on ahead in the film to Boromir's final stand and eventual character redemption this essay will first however briefly explore how Tolkien himself tackled his character.

According to this article (7. [Exploring the people of middle Earth](#), by Megan N. Fontenot, October 15, 2020) Boromir was used as an example by Tolkien to shut down the critics of Tolkien's character's being "Simple minded." He argued that Boromir was representation of even good people having fundamental flaws and if this is true then that is further proof that Boromir represents that those failings can be overcome. Tolkien believed that Boromir was the most human character within the story, being the closest to an actual flawed individual but with good intentions.

Which further enforces the points made earlier in this essay, Boromir is a flawed man and a direct contrast to Aragorn himself, a man with genuine intentions and a good heart being easily tainted at corrupted at this ring's influence and its temptation of the power it could potentially hold.

According to Tolkien Boromir was a character vessel used to make Aragorn more powerful for the story.

Finally, to finish off the section on Boromir this essay will now be exploring his final redemption, the moment Tolkien had decided to evolve and build up ever so slowly throughout the story. In order not only to redeem Boromir himself but to elevate Aragon's place within the story itself.

(8. [The Death of Boromir](#)) Not many words are spoken by Boromir in this scene, this is a prime example of actions speak louder than words. In this very moment towards the end of his character do we truly understand and know who Boromir truly is.

Standing alone protecting Mary and Pipin against a horde of Orcs even in the face of seemingly impossible odds and vastly outnumbered. We finally see the real Boromir shine through, one without the influence of the ring's corruption we see a man stand firm and protect his fellowship.

He fights off a few Orcs before being shot a total of three times with black arrows in the chest but even as the breath from his lungs draw short and he looks the two hobbits in the eyes seemingly already on the verge of defeat. Boromir stands to his feet a still fights regardless, showing Boromir's firm will and strong mindset to protect those of his kin... Where most characters would fall to their knees and accept defeat, Boromir didn't. Boromir is showing to be a heroic, unyielding and much mentally stronger individual, redeeming himself from his previous actions and arrogant behaviour as we see a Boromir without the influence of the ring's power.



His noble sacrifice even encourages a terrified Mary and Pipin to charge in a sudden burst of courage before being captured by the Orcs, this shows that Boromir's actions and heroism had a huge influence upon the small hobbits, further redeeming his character, at least in the eyes of Mary and Pipin.

Boromir now after three arrows in his chest falls to his knees but he still clings to life, a part of him still refusing to give up regardless of how at the edge of death he is. He is unable to defeat the [Uruk-hai](#) and stands at the end of its final shot towards him but he is quickly slain by a well-timed Aragon who is able to make short work of the Uruk-hai and spare Boromir from another piercing shot to the chest. Once again displaying who is the hero of this story and both Peter Jackson and Tolkien make that very clear in their

storytelling, Aragorn succeeded where Boromir failed... the path to kingship, a good man corrupted by power and influence whose fate was practically inevitable.

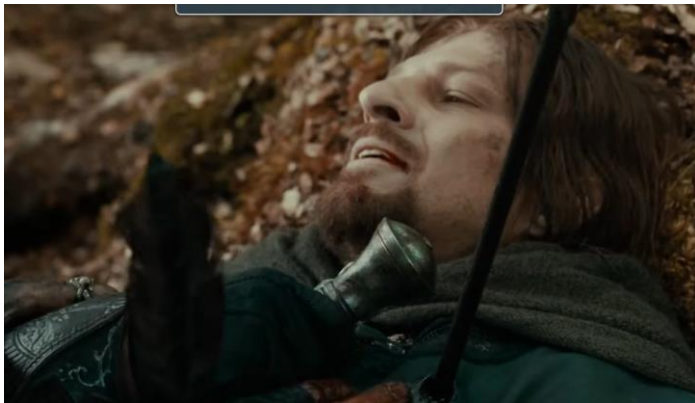
Even Boromir's efforts to protect the hobbits although selfless ultimately fails as they are taken away by the horde of Orcs regardless of his efforts, reinforcing his doomed fate as the tragic hero of this tale, redemption that ultimately leads to failure.

(9. [The Departure of Boromir](#))

It is only poetic that the only to be there in Boromir's final moments is Aragorn, the failed hero falls while the true hero comes to him in his final moments and rises.

In this scene we see how selfless and concerned for his fellowship Boromir truly is, exclaiming that the Orcs **"Took the little ones"** his wording of them almost makes them seem innocent and defenceless in his own mind, like children. He speaks in a manner of failure and disappointment in himself even down playing himself later on in the conversation.

In his final moments Boromir admits his faults and how weak he was "You did what I could not, I tried to take the ring from him." This truly shows how much of a hold the ring had over Boromir and his actions, he appears truly in sorrow and regret of his wrong doings even asking Aragorn for his forgiveness. **"I am sorry I did not see, I have failed you all."** Boromir here is taking accountability for his arrogance and blind passionate nature, without the ring's hold you can truly see how much of an effect it had upon Boromir's mental state for if he had been tempted by its power perhaps none of this would have come to pass.



In his very final moments Boromir is shown to be an honourable man who cared for his people, Aragorn reassures him that he did not fail and that he promises to him that the White City of Gondor will not fall. This adds a moment of relief and reassurance to Boromir with Aragorn even referring to the race of

men as **"Our people"** which prompts Boromir to speak on his true feelings towards his dying breath. "I would have followed you my brother, my captain... my king." This a huge contrast and difference to their first meeting as son of steward and heir to the throne of Gondor. Boromir was in outright denial and arrogant against the idea of Aragorn being king, speaking down to him as well even in their first conversation but now after Aragorn has shown his worth and succeeded where Boromir ultimately failed only now does he acknowledge Aragorn as a rightful king.

In conclusion to Boromir's death, it showed how truly honourable and kind hearted of a warrior he was, even his death granting him reassurance and being mourned by the likes

of Aragon and Legolas. His death sparks the split of the fellowship but also ignites a new found cause amongst to not let him down on the promise made to him upon his death by Aragon. Boromir's character was a true testament to how even the kindest and purest of individual's can be twisted and tainted by the power of the ring and really set the idea going forward with the ring's slow but eventual corruption of Frodo Baggins.



Before stepping into the two pivotal moments in his character, first this essay will delve into a basic introduction to Maximus and the ideals and flaws of his character. (10. [Maximus Decimus Meridius](#)) Maximus is shown to be a loyal and hardened general, who cares about the well-being of his men and the safety of his own family. He is a character who is stubborn on tradition and in the face of the emperor's will being defied and his right to succession being revoked he did not turn over and show his belly in defeat. He is described and shown to be an honourable man with little to no flaws besides plain stubbornness, which ultimately would be a part in his downfall. He is respectful and well-mannered when speaking to Caesar showing high respect for his emperor and when his succession is denied and Caesar's son takes up the mantle of emperor. Maximus is defiant and disrespectful as it is clear in words and actions that he does not respect the new emperor and does not believe him to be fit to lead the people of Rome.

Throughout the film Maximus is shown to be the standard protagonist and good willed hero who is defiant in the face of injustice and even in his own actions and how he speaks to the emperor and those of his family that he is a good willed and honourable man. However, unfortunately this is a world where honourable men get the short straw, in a world and political structure filled with corruption and injustice. He is a dying breed of character living in a world that would just so easily take advantage of his good will and turn it against him.

Moving on this essay will now be tackling yet another famous tragic hero in the film Gladiator and the story of Maximus. However unlike with Boromir where the corruption of power had a direct and personal influence to his character, this essay will be exploring a character where the current world imbalance and the time he lived in was overall corrupted by individuals who abused their own power and stature that influenced his downfall.

The first scene this essay will be diving into is one of the very first scenes that really gives us a perspective on who Maximus is as a character (11. [Marcus Aurelius & Maximus talk of Rome and home.](#))

We as the viewer are shown in their personal and private that Maximus is a very respectful and mature individual, even as the emperor speaks to him as if he were his own son or friend. Maximus still choose to carry himself with proper etiquette around Caesar, with Caesar even going as far to say **“Don’t call me that”** Not only showing how ashamed or tired of that name he is but how he does not want Maximus to see him as Caesar the man who conquered nations but to see him on a more personal level that’s closer to who the emperor actually is.



It is very clear in the first few minutes of this scene how much Maximus respects Caesar, even after Caesar prompts Maximus to speak how he truly feels, Maximus is still hesitant for a moment. This shows the viewer that perhaps Maximus has bottled up emotion on the current state of affairs but simply does wish to speak on them in case he appears out of line or disrespectful towards Caesar.

This entire conversation is grounded in reality and dreams, Caesar speaks of the world as it is and Maximus speaks of a world, he envisions. He speaks of Rome as this utopia in his words **“The light”** in the darkness and cruelty of this world but yet as Caesar argues **“Yet you have never been there, you have not seen what it has become.”** This shows one of Maximus’s first huge flaws and that is young naivety, he shown to care for his men and emotional on the state of affairs while in contrast Caesar is a dying man who has seen the real state of the world.

Caesar has accepted that he is dying and that his conquest is coming to end but Maximus is in denial of this truth he believes that the men fought for Caesar and believes that they didn't die for nothing. Once again displaying Maximus's young naivety, even in the face of the painful truth he still believes in Caesar's conquest and that all this fighting was not for nothing.

This conversation continues and we get a look into Maximus further as a man who loves his son, wife and home. Even being shocked or stunned that the emperor even asked about it, showing that perhaps nobody had asked about Maximus's personal life in sometime... he shows hints of joy and emotion when speaking of his son and home which further enforces this.



To further expand on Maximus's loyalty and compassion for the emperor, it's imperative to understand why Maximus was so loyal to the emperor in the first place. Yes, he was Caesar's general which would have forced or be expected of Maximus to show loyalty, but a man like Maximus who has his own principals and emotional intelligence must have been so loyal for a reason beyond that.

It is very clear from their conversation that this loyalty goes way beyond a simple General and his emperor, it is very clear that these two have a father and Son relationship, it shows in the way they speak to each other and the way Maximus carries himself, his body language. He respects Aurelius... this is further proven by Aurelius even stating as to the reason why he chose Maximus over his own biological son, he states ***"You are the son, I should have had"*** This sentiment was built upon earlier in the conversation when Aurelius described either of his son's, Maximus ***"Is not corrupt"*** and Commodus ***"Is not***

a moral man” this already creates a huge contrast between the two character’s which will be later established in the film.

Even after Aurelius explains his decision for Maximus to become the next ruler of Rome, Maximus is still emotionally torn, it is apparent that he does not deem himself worthy or qualified enough stating earlier in the conversation **“I know nothing of politics”** Which implored Aurelius to explain that is the exact reason he chose him. Commodus is the direct antithesis of Maximus and his Father’s own beliefs which makes him the perfect counter idealist and antagonist for Maximus, to whom this essay will explore a bit more of in just a moment.

So, what can we gather from this short scene of Maximus’s character, first off, his loyalty and emotional intelligence are very apparent making him a fit and worthy leader who you would believe did command the loyalty of tens of thousands of men.

He is selfless as displayed in his concern for not only his men but the health and legacy of Aurelius himself, he understands his place in the world but he far too naive to fully understand its corruption... he speaks of dreams and ideals but when faced with the truth he is emotional torn. He is a man not corrupted by a politics or power, it is very apparent in Maximus’s character that he is a born and raised warrior and it further shows in his character’s behaviour.

This essay will now look at the primary antagonist in Gladiator in contrast to Maximus’s character, it is just as important to understand the antagonist. “They are the backbone of how the protagonist transforms” according to this book written by Golden May (12. [The Antagonist fuels your story. Dec. 21 2020](#)) The antagonist’s journey and who they are is key into understanding who our protagonist truly is.

According to character analyst Leona Montha (13. [Commodus from Gladiator](#)) Commodus is described as a **“Jealous, dishonourable and domestic”** and this not even from his own perspective these attributes and character behaviours are mentioned by other characters and shown to the audience throughout the film. He is shown to be the exact polar opposite of everything Maximus is described and shown to be even further enforced by Aurelius’s own decision to choose Maximus to lead Rome over him.



To further show his character and who he really is in contrast to Maximus it’ll be important to analyse his short first introduction compared to Maximus. This essay will

explore how Commodus tackled his conversation with Aurelius regarding the decision for Maximus to lead Rome and their relationship as father and son in contrast to Maximus. (14. [Commodus and Marcus Aurelius](#))

Immediately Commodus is shown to be far less emotionally intelligent and composed as Maximus, he addresses his father with respect only until he does not hear the news he wanted. Even going as far as to move his head away as Aurelius tries to be empathetic to the boy, displaying that Commodus is deeply hurt by his father's decision but not only that but the respect he showed and the outward appearance he carried was purely artificial.

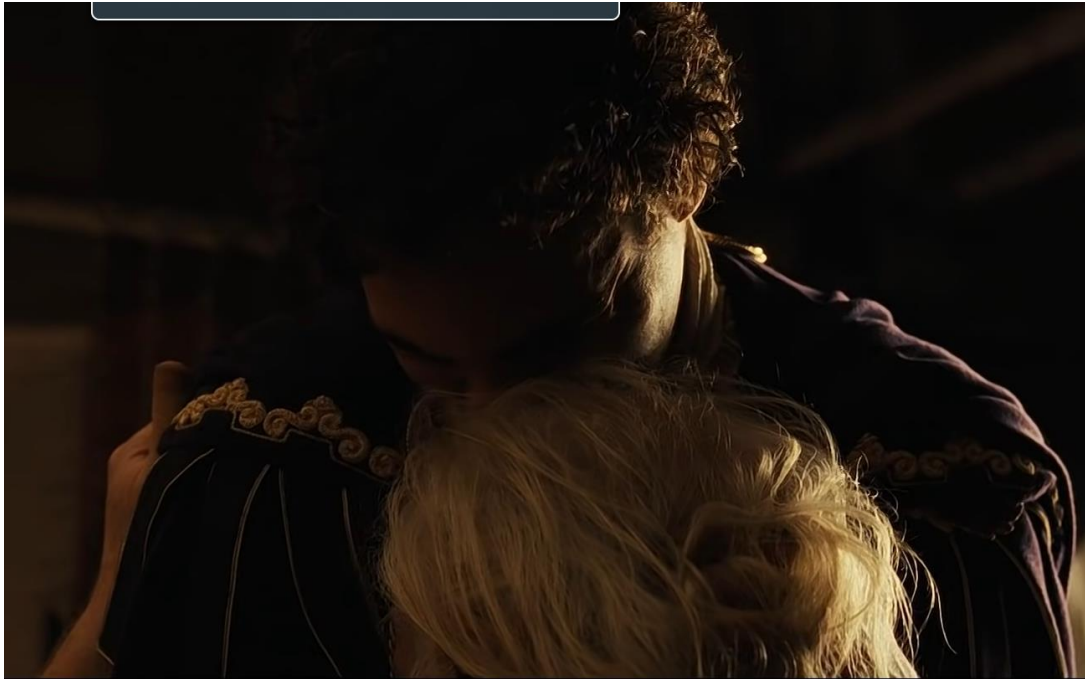
“You once wrote to me once the four key virtues wisdom, justice, temperance and fortitude. As I read the list, I knew I had none of them, but I have other virtues Father, ambition.”

This quote here explains a lot as to who Commodus is as a character but not only that but who Maximus is as a character as these were likely the four key reasons as to why Aurelius saw a true leader in Maximus over Commodus. This is further proven in Maximus's conversation and introduction and arguably his actions throughout the film with eventually losing that naivety at the beginning and gaining that wisdom towards the end of his life.

We can see that unlike Maximus, Commodus is far less emotionally intelligent and driven off pure emotion and in his words ***“Ambition”*** the exact opposite as to who Maximus is shown to be, a more calm and collected individual who understands his role in the world which in a sense can be seen as a form of wisdom also.

Commodus represents Aurelius's failures, even having Commodus refer to Aurelius as ***“Caesar”*** it is very apparent that the mistakes made in Aurelius's past had all manifested within his own son and he had now become everything that Aurelius had tried to walk away from. “Your faults as a son, are my failures as a father.” Aurelius even admits this truth in his own words. Of course, regardless of how regretfully and emotionally empathetic Aurelius may seem it is inevitable that all the worst aspects of himself would manifest in his son and slowly but surely Commodus murders his own father. Displaying how emotionally broken and impulsive this man truly is, a huge contrast and tone shift from Maximus's conversation with Aurelius.

In a sense you could draw from this character comparison and the actions and dialogue throughout these two scenes that Commodus and Maximus are two sides to Aurelius just as if they were both two biological brothers. Maximus represents the best and most ideal virtues of Aurelius while Commodus represents Aurelius's worst and most unideal virtues.



Now where does the root of the corruption of power come into all of this? Well Commodus very much desired Aurelius's power, the armies and the loyalty he had, unlike Maximus he had become very much corrupted by the politics within Rome and eventually drove him to do what he did in a fit of emotional outrage and defiance over his father's decision. A domino effect that would eventually lead to Maximus's being sent for execution and being labelled an enemy of Rome and the butchering and slaughter of his family, the first major pitfall of Maximus's character journey.

Now moving onto the final and most pivotal moment in Maximus's character, his conclusion. (15. [The Death of Maximus.](#)) Maximus is an honourable and kind hearted man who was thrown into a world he simply was prepared for.

Even in his death he is granted peace and fulfils the promise to Aurelius to restore what little of Aurelius dream he could, even in his dying moments Maximus displays one of the four key virtues spoken by Aurelius.

Fortitude and arguably throughout the entire film Maximus displays this prominently, he is a man who lost everything he held dear but yet still kept fighting so that the injustice put upon Rome and his family may be corrected. Even in his dying words there is still a hint of that naivety within him speaking of ***"There was once a dream known as Rome."***



The most tragic part of Maximus's character is that he is constantly shown throughout the film to be a character with a pure heart and noble intentions, a man who is loved by his family and respected by his peers but regardless of all of this, he is the one who suffers the most. Merely because of the world he lived and the consequences of a neglectful father upon his son... Commodus represent everything wrong with Rome and all the corruption it had to offer.

Even in their final dual Commodus seeks to win through cheating and defeating Maximus in a coward like manor, he poisons Maximus but of course like all heroes Maximus overcomes this evil but at the price of his own life.

It was the political climate and corrupted son of a powerful legacy that ultimately resulted in Maximus's fall... something he was naive of till the very end but regardless of all of this in his death he earned the respect of the citizens of Rome.

In conclusion what this essay can draw from these two characters is that power and those who wield it can even influence and taint even the noblest of individuals. Whether that be the ring's influence upon Boromir's mind or the abuse of legacy and politics that result in the assassination and destruction of a man's entire life and everything he holds dear. It's not farfetched to assume that power is the bane of mankind and these films go on record to show that it is what truly faults us and brings out the worst in ourselves and others.

"The hearts of men are easily corrupted, and the ring of power has a mind of its own"
- Galadriel (15. [Lord of the Rings the fellowship the ring.](#))

The tragic hero is just another long list of lessons on this matter and it should also go to prove that not every person gets their happy ending and not every hero is as fortunate or as victorious as Luke Skywalker or Superman... if anything the tragic hero is the most realistic interpretation of this archetype as it reveals cracks within that character and truly shows their flaws and what lead to their ultimate downfall.

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