ARISTOTLE'S THEMES OF TRAGEDY

Aristotle says this concerning the hero, or protagonist, of tragic drama:

1. A tragedy must not be the spectacle of a perfectly good man brought from prosperity to adversity. For this merely shocks us.

2. Nor, of course, must it be that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity: for that is not tragedy at all, but the perversion of tragedy, and revolts the moral sense.

3. Nor, again, should it exhibit the downfall of an utter villain: since pity is aroused by undeserved misfortunes, terror by misfortunes befalling a man like ourselves.

4. There remains, then, as the only proper subject for tragedy, the spectacle of a man not absolutely or eminently good or wise, who is brought to disaster not by sheer depravity but by some error or frailty.

5. Lastly, this man must be highly renowned and prosperous—an Oedipus, a Thyestes, or some other illustrious person.

A broken Lady Macbeth is cared for by her nurse - a still from Polanski’s Macbeth