

Good essay on creon as a man

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Introduction

The main antagonist in the Theban plays, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone, Creon undergoes a major character transformation. This is clearly indicated in the three roles he takes up in respective plays. In Oedipus the King, Creon is the loyal brother-in-law who is accused by the former of murder. He is depicted as a lover of his family and of the people of Thebes. In Oedipus at Colonus, this nature slowly fades away and he becomes devious and deceptive. As a king, Creon, a noble statesman finds himself between a rock and a hard place while he decides to stand for the Law of man rather than the gods only to find out the consequences of his actions a little too late. This paper will critically analyse character changes in Creon in the face of different situations and positions he holds in the play. Creon undergoes a character transformation as his role in the three plays changes. As a man, his character changes from being a practical man to an irrational one. As kin, he transforms from a loving family man to a persecutor and finally as a king, he changes from a patriot and law maker to a tyrant. He presents the classic case of tragic heroism as he tries flying too close to the sun in an effort to stand up against the law of the gods.

Oedipus the King

The land of Thebes, where Oedipus rules as king is under a curse, according to the blind prophet Tiresias. As the prophet tries to explain it, he foretells that the murderer of King Laus who latter on marries his wife is to blame for the misfortune of the land. King Oedipus suspects Creon of his attempt to kill the king and take over his throne. At this point, Creon is the third in

command in the throne and is the loyal brother-in-law to the king. According to Sophocles, Eamon and Rachel, Pg. 22, they quote, “ No, there’s nothing worse; branded a traitor in the city, a traitor to all of you and my good friends” 575. It is clear Creon was rather offended by the King’s accusation, despite Creon’s loyalty to the state. Creon is shocked at this accusation as he describes himself as a lover of the people and the land. He is a just man and upholds and respects the law. However, he depicts rational behavior and decides to not reprimand the king and brother in law insisting he has no interest whatsoever in the crown. This is indicated after Oedipus accused him of treachery “ Hear me out, then judge me on the facts (609)” (Sophocles, Eamon and Rachel, Pg. 41). This proves that Creon analyses facts beforehand before proclaiming judgement on an issue. This makes him rational in nature.

Furthermore, he indicates that he is not the least interested in the crown as he is of almost equal power with the king and being in the throne would only result to headaches. This is depicted as follows. “ Who in his right mind would rather rule and live in anxiety than sleep in peace? Particularly if he enjoys the same authority. Not I, I’m not the man to yearn for kingship, not with a king’s power in my hands”. (651-663) (Sophocles, Pg. 44). this shows that Creon is comfortable in his position and is not power hungry. Creon is also portrayed to be a man of his word. This is true as in the case of his handing power to Oedipus, fulfilling his promise following Oedipus success. In this case, following the death of King Laus, Creon promised to give the man who solves Sphinx’s riddle, which had come to Thebes, the hand of his

sister Queen Jocasta. He does not go back on his promise when Oedipus successfully solves the riddle and agrees to give up his hand on the throne.

Oedipus at Colonus

Here, Creon changes to become conniving and deceptive. He is not a man of his word any more. This is illustrated when he tries to convince Oedipus to go back to Thebes as the people are claiming him back as their kinsman. However, in real sense, he comes to learn of the promise of blessings from the gods upon the land which Oedipus is buried and therefore wills him to come back to Thebes. This is as indicated in the book, “ It was by reason of my years that I was chosen to persuade your guest and bring him back to Thebes; not the delegate of one man, but commissioned by the State, since of all Thebans I have most bewailed, being his kinsman, his most grievous woes” (Sophocles, Eamon and Rachel, Pg. 22). Once Oedipus disagrees, he threatens to kidnap his daughter Antigone just as he has done to Ismene, his other daughter. This goes against his earlier promise to Oedipus, in the previous play Oedipus the King where he promises to protect his daughters when requested by Oedipus as indicated, “ But my two daughters, my poor helpless girls, clustering at our table, never without me hovering near them. Take care of them, I beg you”. (1602-1605) (Sophocles, Pg. 138)

This goes against his character in the same play where he pities Oedipus for the misfortune that has befallen to him by bringing his daughters to see him and say their goodbyes. Creon answers in the affirmative when asked if he brought his daughters to see him as illustrated indicated: “ Yes, it’s my doing. I know the joy they gave you all these years, the joy you must feel now” (line 1616) (Sophocles, Pg. 139). This shows that he pities Oedipus’s

situation by allowing his daughters, whom he loves dearly, to see him for the last time.

Antigone

Creon changes for the worst in this play. He becomes completely merciless and chooses to execute Antigone for having gone against his decree of burying his nephew Polynices. With this, he sentences Antigone to be buried alive: “ Lead, lead her on. And, as I said, without delay immure in yon cavernous tomb, and then depart. Leave her, or lone and desolate to die.” (1020-1022) (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 52). However, towards the end of this play, Creon becomes merciful and takes heed of advice given to him by the Chorus. He decides to revoke his previous order of entombing Antigone only to arrive a little too late when Antigone chooses to kill herself.

Creon as kin

In the three plays, Creon is depicted as a family man. He is the brother-in-law of the king, as Jose, his sister is the queen. He is married with a son Hauses. He is also an uncle to Oedipus’ children, Polynices, Antigone, Isebel and Eteocles.

Oedipus the King

Here, Creon is the loyal brother-in-law who is third in command. He enjoys the privileges that come with his position and does not show any interest in the crown, terming it as a position that causes headaches and sleepless nights. He is also indifferent when Oedipus asks him to take care of his daughters once he goes blind as illustrated, “ Your own flesh and blood. Never bring them down to the level of my pains. Pity them. You’re their only

hope. Promise me, noble Creon, touch my hand" (1650-1654). (Sophocles, Eamon and Rachel, Pg. 135) He pulls out when Oedipus extends his hand. At this point he does not show any loyalty for family and he takes up the helm of the throne. This is as proven by the withdrawal of his hand once Oedipus reaches out to him.

Oedipus at Colonus

Here, Creon pretends he is remorseful of the misfortune that has fallen upon Oedipus in an attempt to lure him back to Thebes. He only cares for his own self-interest and that of Thebes. He also exhibits mercilessness by threatening Oedipus that he would kidnap his daughter Antigone as he had done so with Ismene. He uses emotional blackmail to trick Oedipus to come back to Thebes. This is unlike his former self as in Oedipus the King where he pities Oedipus and agrees to bring his two daughters to see him as described earlier in the essay. He shows no concern for family.

Antigone

Creon does not care for the feelings of his son who is engaged to marry Antigone and does not waive his decree to save his son from loosing his betrothed. On the contrary, he stands by his decree even upon been reproached by his son. He also chooses to proceed with his law to have Antigone entombed alive despite her being of the same flesh and blood. He is consumed with maintaining the law for the sake of maintaining order in Thebes irrespective of who is caught in the crossfire. At the end, he exhibits some form of mercy as he commands to have Antigone released only to do so a little too late as Antigone has already killed herself. Upon knowing this,

his son also commits suicide as well as his wife who is consumed with grief of losing his son.

Creon as a leader

Creon takes up the throne upon the death of Oedipus' sons, Polynices and Eteocles who are both killed in battle against each other. This happens in the play Antigone. At this stage, Creon is drunk with power. He rules Thebes with a strong hand and becomes a tyrant who suffers a serious lack of proper judgment. He acts this way in the need to keep Thebes under control on the passing of both leaders. He confesses this to Antigone when he indicates that his only concern is maintaining the political and social order of Thebes. His concern for the law of the gods changes in Antigone following his decree to prevent Polynices receiving a respectable burial. In Oedipus the King, he waits for direction from the gods upon Oedipus' request to have him exiled from Thebes as illustrated in the play, " I have done that already, I promise you. First I wanted the god to clarify my duties". (1573-1574). (Sophocles, Pg. 142)

However, this changes in the play Antigone when he upholds the Law of man and disregards the Law of gods following his decree to have Polynices not receive a proper burial but rot in the battlefield as a lesson, " Concerning those two sons, Eteocles, who died in deeds of might illustrious, fighting for our fatherland, to honor him with sepulture, all rites duly performed that to the noblest dead of right belong" (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 28). This is not the case for his brother Eteocles who is set to receive a hero's burial, " Not so his brother; him I decree that none should dare entomb, that none should utter wail or loud lament, but leave his corpse unburied, by the dogs and

vultures mangled, foul to look upon” (222-235 . (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 28). This was Creon’s way of punishing Polynices unpatriotic act and rewarding his brother’s heroic act.

His decree goes against that of the gods as Antigone indicates: “ Yes, for it was not Zeus who gave them forth, nor Justice, dwelling with the Gods below” (493) (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 51). Here, Antigone is of the opinion that the Law of the gods is far more superior than compared to the Law of Man thereby explaining her disobedience of Creon’s decree. The reason for Creon going against the Law of the gods was that he thought that the Law of man was superior to the former and he took pride in his leadership without the reference of the gods.

Creon was a servant leader. He wanted to protect and serve his people the best way he could by standing by the decrees he instigated. He loved the land of Thebes and protected it against invasion from his nephew Polynices. He was also a just leader. This is indicated by his offering a chance to Antigone to plead her case and admit whether or not she was guilty of the accusation presented to him as well as asking her whether or not she was aware of the King’s decree: “ And thou, then, bending to the ground thy head, confesses thou, or dost deny the deed?”(482) (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 55). Creon offers Antigone an opportunity to defend her actions. This character trait, unlike others discussed above, remains unchanged throughout the trilogy. He is patriotic and loves his people and the land of Thebes. Creon also comes across as a chauvinistic leader. He does not believe in the leadership of women: “ Go, then, below. And if thou must have love, love thou find’st there. While I live, at least, a woman shall not rule”

(590-592). (Sophocles and Griffith, Pg. 69). This is not surprising judging on the timeline of the plays which were written during the time when women's leadership rights were not recognized. The Marriage Act of the First century, marriage was meant mainly for progeny reasons and for providing good housekeeping, a task that was left for women. This proves that there was no place for women in leadership positions.

Conclusion

In summary, the Theban plays tell of the tale of those who were brave enough to go against the gods. The tragic story projects the classic case of flying too close to the sun. Hubris became the downfall of Oedipus as his self righteousness became his curse only to realize too late. Creon followed suit with an attempt to go against the gods only to fall flat to his face, alone in the world, having killed his family for the sake of the Law of man

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