

Oedipus rex as a religious drama assignment

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His actions are riven by the intention to flout a prophecy, which is, of course, killing his father and marrying his mother. [6] He is not consciously guilty of the crimes of incest, but the reality and irony of the play states that he is endorsing them. He takes the role of husband and son, brother and father; he is mutually guilty and innocent, despite the juxtaposed nature of these conditions, a reflection of the conditions from which humanity sprang. There is a definite tone of reverence in the dark subject matter, and a subsequent lesson that Gods that their prophecies demand respect.

Nevertheless, the setting of the festival and tribute to the Gods make it a fundamentally religious play. Central to religious drama is the concept that ' man must conform to divine order- even at the cost of himself. ' C7] In Oedipus Rex, this divine order is predetermined by the prophecies of the Oracle which is the driving force for the entire plot. Oedipus' parents receive the prophecy at his birth; later, when called a ' bastard', Oedipus goes to the Oracle and receives the same information; and when a plague attacks Thebes, Creon is sent to consult it again, which reveals its fulfilment. 8] The Oracle's presence is highly active, and in this sense, fulfils the role of an antagonist. Its also enforces Aristotle's notion that a character is only a result of plot, as the characters action are solely dictated by the information provided by the Oracle. [9] The role is further enforced by the fact that it is not a mere invention; it was a very real part of Greek culture, where spirituality and politics are intricately linked. Despite the characters best efforts (Jacosta and Laius leaving their son for dead, and Oedipus fleeing who he believed to be his parents. its fulfilment was seemingly inevitable, perhaps even caused by their knowledge of the prophecy. [10] It is in the

avoidance Of circumstance in which the prophecy could be fulfilled, that is proximity to the dangerous other, that Oedipus and Laius were able to meet.

[1 1] As afore mentioned the prediction is the force behind the plot, but it is the characters resistance that cause the conflict and therefore the drama.

Not to taint a religious discussion with a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective, but, as this conflict shows, Oedipus is perhaps the least likely person to have an Oedipus Complex; he dedicates his life to its avoidance.

C12] When he discovers his predicament, his costs are banishment, he loss of his children and his eyes, “ Now I will do what must be done to the source of This is a highly symbolic action as in Greek the words for ‘ know and ‘ see’ are correspondent. [14] He is literally removing the ‘ knowledge’ of his sins, knowledge he sought with such dynamism from the oracle, an image drenched with irony. The eventual acceptance that Apollo’s will have been fulfilled is, perhaps, the religious moral of the play; the Gods are omniscient, therefore their laws will always be up held.

Aristotle states, within its six elements (plot, character, diction, spectacle, thought and 5], that ‘ Tragedy is an imitation... f events inspiring fear or pity[1 6] and that the Tragic hero is ‘ above the common man’, but not definitively good, he must have a flaw. [1 7] In relevance to Oedipus Rex, and the sense in which it is a religious play, these elements highlight the enforced influence the presence of the Gods have on the actions of the characters, and the concept of free will. The event ‘ inspiring fear and pity’ is most likely the act of incest.

Although a taboo subject regardless of culture and period, its interpretation changes across time. A modern view is one that inherently links incest to child abuse, as we are greatly influenced by feminist theory. [18] Such theory states that incest is an abuse of the power dynamics in the family unit, usually from father to daughter. [19] However the incest portrayed in the play is unwittingly performed, by consenting adults, but, nevertheless, provokes a disgusted reaction. The cross-contamination of ' blood' is universally considered ' tainted and unnatural'. [20] The circumstances surrounding Oedipus and Jocasta's union could be the fear provoking element. The magnitude of the tragic universe created requires the reader to question whether or not Oedipus would really have killed a stranger over right of way, if the riddle of the ' Sphinx' was honestly that difficult- which allowed his passage to Thebes, or if the drunken mans accusation of ' bastard' were mere coincidence, The enormity of the irony suggests some foul play on the part of the Gods.