

Tragic and epic hero

Literature



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The Role of Humiliation and Punishment in a Hero's Quest: An Analysis of Oedipus the King and Sundiata. Introduction Oedipus the King is a tragic story/play about Oedipus who was king of Thebes, when the god Apollo cursed the murderer of the previous king. King Laius was murdered, and his murderer was at large. Apollo issued a decree that whoever committed the crime should be identified and exiled from the community. It was later discovered that King Oedipus had committed the crime, and he was to face the full punishment (Greene & Richmond, page 8). Sundiata, is a classical epic about Old Mali. Sundiata was a king who was described as the conqueror of conquerors, he conquered many territories, in the process humiliating and punishing the Kings and subjects in those territories (Niane, page 21). It has been postulated that for a hero to discover himself and have an identity, he must go through humiliation and face some punishment.

Textual Evidence

From Oedipus the King, Oedipus is a tragic in himself. This is expressed by the traits that he possesses. At the beginning, the king came out, "as noble, and admired by his subjects". He is seen as having, "wisdom, courage and integrity". However, he ends up, "mutilated, disgraced and humiliated by his killing of King Laius". The King blinded himself as a sign of humiliation so that he could not face his subjects or uncle (brother-in-law). This portrayed him as immoral and as a criminal (Greene & Richmond, page 7). Oedipus starts out as a head of state, and ends up as blind and a beggarly nobody. Oedipus humiliated himself by marrying his grieving mother, and siring children with her; his half siblings.

King Sundiata believed his enemies or people who resisted his rule were to face punishment or humiliation. The King conquered many territories, and

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the Kings of those territories were killed, humiliated or punished. However, individuals who accepted his rule were fully protected by his armies (Niane, page 21).

The punishment that Oedipus was to receive for his heinous acts was exile. The, “ oracle at Apollo’s shrine” dictates that the slayer of King Laius must be known and exiled. The punishment was carried out by his brother in-law. This was humiliating for Oedipus because he had to face his in-law in light of what he did (Greene & Richmond, page 15).

These three examples are crucial in portraying the necessity of punishment and humiliation for King Oedipus. The punishment meted on him enabled him to reflect on his actions especially the marriage to his mother. From the punishment, the King realized his greed for power, his lust for his mother and his corruption of mind. Punishment was used effectively by Sundiata as a strategy for ruling. His subjects and enemies were afraid of angering him, which would be met by severe punishment.

Reference

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